

THE ARGOSY

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THE WARDEN OF THE MARCHES

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"THE KINGS OF THE EAST," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XI

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

AS soon as Dick awoke in the morning, the subject of the sweet-seller recurred to his mind, and looking out of his dressing-room window, he called to Ismail Bakhsh, who, from his long connection with the family, was regarded as the head of the household staff.

"Has that sweet-seller turned up yet, Ismail Bakhsh?"

"No, sahib, I have not seen him this morning."

"Well, when he does, you can detain him. I want to ask him a question or two."

"The thing is done, sahib. If the protector of the poor would listen to a word from this unworthy one——"

"Well, what is it?"

"It was in my heart yesterday, sahib, to examine all the verandahs, lest the storm should have shaken the pillars, and in so doing I found that the work of the rats under the floors has been great and very evil. Surely there are many places in which the planks are loose and easy to be moved, but on this side of the house it is the worst. Before the Kumsioner Sahib's rooms a man might even squeeze himself in and hide under the verandah floor."

"We shall never get rid of the rats until we have proper cement floors—and it's no good thinking of that now," added Dick, half to himself. "But are you sure there's nothing worse than rats about, Ismail Bakhsh? I don't like the idea of that hole."

"I also suspected evil, sahib, but having sent two of the servants' sons in with torches, I was content when they found nothing."

"I hope you wedged the boards firmly into their places?"

"I put them back, sahib, but why fasten them? There was no man inside, and in case any should seek to enter, the hole should be barricaded from within, not from without. Moreover, if the protector of the poor would invite Winlock Sahib to bring his sporting dog to the house, with your honour's own dogs we might succeed in killing all the rats before mending the floors."

"Good idea. Ask the Memsahib to give you a *chit* to Winlock Sahib. No; it had better be to-morrow. I shall be out all to-day."

Ismail Bakhsh salaamed and departed, and Dick returned to his dressing, both of them totally unconscious that nothing but a half-inch plank separated them from a man who had listened to the whole of their colloquy. The bungalow had been run up in haste, never having been intended for a permanent dwelling. Hence the contrast of its somewhat ramshackle appearance with that of the substantial stone houses in the cantonments, and hence also the perpetual worry caused by the colonies of rats inhabiting the space under the floors, which should have been filled up with masonry. However, since innumerable complaints and remonstrances had brought nothing but promises and an occasional snub from those in authority, Dick and Georgia continued to live on in their unsatisfactory dwelling, and to wage intermittent warfare against the rats. But the rats could not fairly be accused of the worst of the damage of which Ismail Bakhsh complained, for crouched under the boards lay the sweet-seller, who had effected an entrance by sliding out one of the planks and pulling another aside, returning them to their places when he had crawled in. His dark face paled when Ismail Bakhsh suggested bringing the dogs, but when he heard Dick postpone the rat-hunt to the next day, he breathed freely again.

"To-day is all I want," he said to himself. "When I have once got the paper for Jehanara Bibi from that accursed half-blood, my work is done, and Nāth Sahib may set his dogs on my track as much as he likes—and his sowars too."

He remained crouched in his lair all morning until the Commissioner had dismissed his clerks, and hobbled round to the other side of the house to look for Mabel. As soon as the sound of his crutch had become inaudible in the distance, there was a hesitating tap on one of the loose boards. It was answered by a bolder knock from below, the board was pushed aside immediately, and a yellow hand, trembling as if with ague, passed a paper through the crack. The sweet-seller seized it, and pressed the fingers of the transmitter, which were hurriedly withdrawn. The hidden man secreted the paper carefully in his clothing, and crawled round to the front of the house, whence he could watch through a peep-hole all that went on in this part of the compound. When noon was come, and the servants had all betaken themselves to their own quarters, he removed the sliding

plank and slipped out, bringing with him his stock in trade, and replacing the board carefully. Having assured himself that there was no one looking out, he crossed the compound boldly, climbed the wall at a point where various projecting stones and convenient hollows afforded a foothold, and walked with dignified haste to the nearest sand-hill. On the farther side of this he buried his tray and his sweets in the sand, and then, girding up his loins, set out resolutely in the direction of Dera Gul.

Dusk had already fallen when he reached the fortress, where he received a respectful greeting from the ragged guards, who informed him that the chief was in his zenana, but as soon as the news was brought that Narayan Sing had returned, Bahram Khan sent word that he should be admitted immediately—a high honour which was not infrequently the reward of the indispensable spy. Committing himself to the guidance of one of the slave-boys, Narayan Sing passed behind the curtain and into the ante-room, to discover Bahram Khan reclining upon the divan in the easiest possible undress. The pleasant murmur of the hubble-bubble, as he approached, prepared the visitor to find the room full of smoke, and his master seemed at first too much engrossed with his pipe to notice his entrance. Cross-legged in the corner sat the Eurasian Jehanara, shrouded in her veil, her glittering eyes reflecting the faint light which was shed by a brazier of glowing charcoal.

"Peace, Narayan Sing!" said the Prince at last, taking the mouth-piece of the long leathern tube lazily from his lips. "Is all well?"

"All is well, Highness. I have here the full forecast of the plans of Barkaraf Sahib, from the hands of his confidential clerk."

Jehanara laughed harshly. "Thou hadst but little difficulty with Antonio D'Costa?" she said.

"What knowest thou of the swine?" asked Bahram Khan jealously.

"I have not seen him for years, Highness, but he is my cousin, and I was acquainted with his character as a youth, and heard of his doings as a man. Knowing thy desire to learn the intentions of the Kump-sioner Sahib, and hearing that my cousin was in his office, it needed only that I should instruct the skilful Narayan Sing to approach him in the right way."

"And I," said Narayan Sing, "needed but to hold before his eyes the copies of the bonds I had obtained from certain money-lenders, and threaten to show them to Barkaraf Sahib, when he fell down on his knees before me, and was ready to do whatever I might desire, for fear of the ruin that menaced him."

"It is well," growled Bahram Khan. "But what information does he give?"

Narayan Sing took out the paper which had been handed to him in his hiding-place, and laid it on the floor before Jehanara. She took it up, and moving forward, scrutinised its contents eagerly by the dim light of the brazier.

"The Kumpsoner Sahib has finished drawing up a report," she said joyfully, "in which he recommends the immediate withdrawal of the subsidy, and the recall of Beltring Sahib from Nalapur, on the ground that the provisions of the treaty were merely temporary arrangements, the necessity for which has passed away." Bahram Khan laughed, and she went on: "The Amir Sahib is to be assured of the continuous friendship and goodwill of the Sarkar, which with the one hand will take away his rupees, and with the other will give him liberty to govern his people without interference or guidance."

"Surely the infidels are delivered into our hands!" cried Bahram Khan. "And when is the proclamation to be made?"

"The Kumpsoner Sahib desires an order, which may be carried out by the political officer on the spot."

"Then the fool himself is leaving the border? Let him go. I care not to take his life. He has played into my hands, and may well carry his folly elsewhere. It is Nāth Sahib that I want, and surely even my uncle will turn against him when he knows that the Sarkar has determined to break the treaty."

"Gently, Highness!" entreated Jehanara. "The Amir Sahib holds firmly to his friends, and is a man not easily turned from his purpose. Such is his friendship for Nāth Sahib that we can only hope to involve him in the plot through a desire to help, and not to injure him."

"But," put in Narayan Sing, who had been debating in his own mind with considerable anxiety whether he should tell his news at once, or wait until after he had secured a moment's private conversation with Jehanara, "I heard tidings yesterday, Highness, that seem to prove the Kumpsoner Sahib not to be the friend thou didst reckon him. I could have told them sooner, but I fear they will not be pleasing in thine ears."

"Let us hear them," cried Bahram Khan, while Jehanara shot an angry glance at the spy. He ought to have known by this time that it was wise to soften and sweeten agitating news, and not to administer it undiluted.

"It was said among the servant-people that Barkaraf Sahib had asked Nāth Sahib for his sister, Highness, and that even now he has betrothed her to him."

There was a moment's incredulous silence, and then Bahram Khan sprang up from the divan, sending the heavy cut-glass bottle of the water-pipe flying, and almost overturning the brazier. "And this is the fruit of your counsel, both of you!" he shouted. "Who was it that held me back when I would have fallen on the whole body of the English as they returned from their fools' dinner in the desert, and killed them all, except Nāth Sahib's sister? Who was it again that bade me suffer my servants to be taken prisoners and held captive, and be tried for their lives by a boy, and that told me to rejoice when I received them back unharmed? Thou, O woman! thou, dog of an

idolater ! Surely ye were in league with the Kumpsioner Sahib to steal the girl from me, and he has bribed you to blacken my face in the eyes of all my people !”

“Highness,” said Jehanara with dignity, “thou art unjust to thy faithful servants. Fear not ; I know the ways of the English, and this betrothal need not lead to marriage for many months. Nāth Sahib’s sister shall yet be thine, and the Kumpsioner Sahib may wait in vain for his bride.”

“Wait !” cried Bahram Khan, sinking again upon his cushions ; “nay, he shall wait for nothing but death. He shall die by inches, and before my eyes, for having sought to fool me. If he escapes, both your lives shall pay for it.”

“As thou wilt, Highness. But was it not thy admiration of her beauty which first showed the Kumpsioner Sahib that the girl was fair ? Suffer thy servant to consider the matter for a moment, and she will offer thee her counsel.”

Having set Bahram Khan to look at affairs in this new light, Jehanara established herself again in her corner, gazing fixedly at the hot coals. Both her life and that of Narayan Sing were at stake, and she knew it ; and she had no desire to die. Six years before, she had played a desperate game with Bahram Khan, conscious that in him she faced an opponent as cunning and as faithless as herself. The conditions were unequal, for she staked far more than he did on the result, and he won, possibly because her sense of the risk she was running had robbed her of the perfect coolness necessary if success was to be attained. He had not married her, even by Mohammedan rites, and nothing short of full legal recognition could have vindicated, in the eyes of her own people, the course she had pursued. Robbed of her anticipated triumph, she made no attempt to return to them, but set herself to obtain by every means in her power the ascendancy over the Prince’s mind which she had failed to gain over his heart. Fresh failures and unspeakable mortifications had awaited her. The women of the household, from the lovely little Ethiopian bride, to whom was awarded the position Jehanara had coveted for herself, to the humblest hill-girl who had been kidnapped to become at once a slave and a Muslimeh, saw to it that she ate the bread of bitterness, but in spite of taunts and contempt she kept the one end in view until her enterprise was crowned with complete success. Bahram Khan would listen to no advice but hers, having learnt by experience that his confidence was justified by the result. The intrigue by which first the Commissioner, and then the Viceroy, had been convinced of his wrongs was of her devising, and had proved so successful that she was firmly convinced that if it had not been for Dick’s opposition, she would already have seen Bahram Khan established as his uncle’s heir. Hence her hatred for Dick, heightened by his contemptuous treatment of herself, was at least as strong as that of the disappointed claimant. As she sat brooding over the charcoal at this moment, there was a cruel light in her eyes while

she ran hastily over the points of the scheme which had sprung complete into her mind when Bahram Khan accused her of treachery.

"Highness," she said at last, and Bahram Khan propped himself up on his cushions with a muttered growl, while the trembling Narayan Sing appeared to take fresh interest in life, "this perfidy of the Kumpsioner Sahib's provides thee with what was most needed, a way of involving the Amir Sahib in our plans. Nay, by its means, with the blessing of Heaven, thy servants will yet behold thee seated upon his throne, with the sanction of the Sarkar."

"Wonderful!" cried the Prince, with gleaming eyes. "Go on."

"First of all, then, Highness, the Kumpsioner Sahib must not leave Alibad before the proclamation is made—but we will consider presently by what means he may be induced to remain on the border. Next, instructions must be sent to the Vizier Ram Sing to represent thy quarrel to his master, the Amir Sahib, in this wise. Thou wilt say that the Kumpsioner Sahib, with a great show of friendliness, promised to get thee Nāth Sahib's sister for a wife, but that he has befooled thee, and demanded the maiden for himself. Thy uncle may not altogether believe that Barkaraf Sahib really offered thee his help in the matter—" she could not restrain a touch of scorn as she glanced with half-veiled eyes at the miserable native who had brought himself to believe that an Englishman looked favourably on his desire to marry an Englishwoman. "Still, he has heard through his sister, thy mother, of thy love for the girl, and he will soon hear that she is betrothed to the Kumpsioner Sahib, so that there can be no doubt of the enmity between him and thee. Next thou wilt say that by setting spies on this enemy of thine thou hast learnt that he has persuaded the Sarkar to withdraw the subsidy. This he does in order to gain honour for himself by annexing the Nalapur state, and also that he may overthrow Nāth Sahib, whom thy uncle loves, and who, as we know through Ram Sing, has sworn to resign his office rather than forsake his friend. Thus, then, thy uncle will be eager to champion Nāth Sahib's cause against Barkaraf Sahib, and thou, spurred on by thy anger, wilt show him the way. According to the words of this paper of my cousin's, the Sarkar's change of policy will be announced at a durbar to be held in the Agency at Nalapur, and the Amir Sahib will do well to see to it that this durbar is not held. While the Kumpsioner Sahib, and Nāth Sahib, and all the sahibs from here, are entangled in the mountains on the way to the city, they must be caught in an ambush of the Amir Sahib's troops. The Kumpsioner Sahib may well be killed in the first onset, to save all further trouble, but Nāth Sahib and the other friends of thy uncle need only be disarmed and kept prisoners, the writing of the Sarkar being taken from them. Then the Amir Sahib may send a peaceful message to the Sarkar that, hearing rumours of evil intended against him, he has seized a number of its officers and holds them as hostages, until he shall be assured that his fears are groundless. So then the Sarkar, fearing for the lives of its sahibs, will send some great man to reassure

his Highness, and explain that it was only the evil doings of the dead Barkaraf Sahib that caused the mischief, and Nāth Sahib will be put in his place, and the subsidy continued, and all be well—after the payment, perhaps, of a slight fine for the accidental slaying of the Kumpsioner Sahib."

"But where is the advantage of all this for me?" bellowed Bahram Khan. "It would rid me of the Kumpsioner Sahib, but no more—nay, it makes Nāth Sahib the head where he is now the tail."

"Seest thou not, Highness, that this is the plot as it must appear in the eyes of thine uncle? Now lift the veil, and behold it as it is in thine own mind. Who should naturally be chosen to command the force lying in ambush but the Sardar Abd-ul-Nabi, and is not he a close friend of the Vizier Ram Sing, and wholly devoted to thy cause? To him the Amir Sahib will give orders that he is to slay no one but Barkaraf Sahib, and that the lives of the rest are to be saved, even at the risk of his own, but from thee he will receive the command to slay all and spare none, not even the youngest."

"Nay, I will ride with them, and smite them myself from behind!" cried Bahram Khan.

"That must not be, Highness. Thou wilt be far away at the time."

"Then Nāth Sahib and Barkaraf Sahib shall be saved alive and brought to me, that I may see them die."

"The risk is too great, Highness. Hast thou forgotten the day when Sinjā Kilin Sahib was attacked in a certain nullah and all his escort slain, and how he fought his way out alone and rode to his camp, and returning with a fresh body of troops, fell upon the tribesmen when they were stripping the dead, and slew them every one? Not a man shall live—be content with that, for there is other work for thee than watching their blood flow."

"And what may that be, woman?"

"Thou wilt be waiting here, Highness, and as soon as a swift messenger brings thee word that the sahibs have been attacked, thou wilt ride with all speed to Alibad. Knowing that all the sahibs are away except the Padri and two or three others who are not soldiers, and that there is no place of refuge, thou wilt hasten to save them and the Memsahibs. If they believe in thy professions of friendship, then all is well—they are delivered into our hands. But it is in my mind that they will not trust thee, and that is even better, for then all the evil that follows will spring from their own lack of confidence. The men of the Regiment who are left behind will barricade themselves in their lines, but there is no need to attack them then. The Bazaar and the European houses will be fired—by the *badmashes* of the place, doubtless, and in the turmoil and confusion all the sahibs will be killed, but all men will behold thee rushing hither and thither like one possessed, commanding thy soldiers with curses to save the white men."

Bahram Khan chuckled grimly, for the picture appealed to him.

"And at last," went on Jehanara, "seeing that thou canst do nothing, so few are thy men, thou wilt retire sorrowfully, taking with thee such women and loot as may come in thy way—but only for safe keeping." Bahram Khan chuckled again. "The next day, when the Amir Sahib learns that he has indeed raised his hand against the Sarkar, and slain so many sahibs, he will give up the attempt to keep his army in check, and they will come to Alibad and complete the work begun by thee, before ravaging the rest of the frontier. All will be the deed of thine uncle, and he it is that will have to answer to the Sarkar."

"True, O woman. Trust me that his evil deeds shall blot out mine. But how if Nāth Sahib's sister should chance to be slain also?"

"Her safety is thy care, Highness. Before anything else, thou wilt have seized Nāth Sahib's house, which is on the outskirts of the town, and sent off his wife and sister here, under a sufficient guard."

"Who will see that Nāth Sahib's Mem troubles us no more," laughed Bahram Khan.

"Not so, Highness. The doctor lady must find safety with the Moti-ul-Nissa."

"Nay, is she not Nāth Sahib's wife?" cried Bahram Khan, much injured.

"There must be sanctuary for the doctor lady with thy mother," repeated Jehanara firmly. "What harm can she do thee, Highness?"

"She is Sinjāj Kilin's daughter. That is enough."

"True, Highness, and for that very reason she must live. The Begum must be warned to hide her in the inmost recesses of the zenana, since the Amir Sahib clamours for her blood, and she herself must understand that thou art protecting her at the risk of thy life. See here, Highness, and think not that it is any love for thy foes that moves me. The success of our plan depends upon her testimony. When thou hast made thyself master in Nalapur, and goest forth to meet the armies of the Empress with the head of the Amir Sahib as a peace-offering, there will yet be voices raised against thee. But when it is known that thou didst save the doctor lady, the wife and daughter of thine enemies, and place her in safety in thy own zenana, who shall judge thee too hardly that thou couldst not save Alibad? Thou hast done all in thy power, and the Memsahib will bear witness to thee. And as for sparing her—why, there is Nāth Sahib's sister left for thee still."

"Aha," laughed Bahram Khan, "and she is not of Sinjāj Kilin's blood. She will not fight like the doctor lady."

"Nay, but she is of Nāth Sahib's blood," said Jehanara, conscious once more of an inconsistent thrill of perverted pride in her father's race, as she remembered what Englishwomen as fair and as timid as Mabel had done before in such circumstances; "but all will be well, Highness, whatever happens. If she is found married to thee, she cannot, as a *pardah* woman, be brought into court to testify against

thee, and if she is dead, why, she killed herself in her terror, not waiting to learn what were thy intentions towards her. And women pass, but the throne lasts, Highness. The one is more than the other."

"Truly thou art a veritable Shaitan!" To Bahram Khan's mind the epithet conveyed a high compliment. "Set the matter in train, then. Here is my seal." He took off his heavy signet, and handed it to her. "Do thou and Narayan Sing see that all is in order, so that none of the sahibs escape. But what of Barkaraf Sahib? If he leaves the border, I lose half my vengeance."

"It may be, Highness—" the speaker was Narayan Sing, who had remained silent in sheer astonishment at the daring and resourcefulness of his co-plotter, "that the Hasrat Ali Begum might help us in the matter. If her Highness were to hear that any evil threatened the doctor lady or her husband, she would doubtless send a messenger to warn her. Might she not become aware, through some indiscretion" (he looked across at Jehanara), "that the Kumpsonier Sahib was departing from the border to seek his own safety, leaving Nāth Sahib to carry out a dangerous and disagreeable task? Her Highness would send the Eye-of-the-Begum immediately to inform the doctor lady of what she had heard, and does there live a woman upon earth who, having received such information, would not at once fling the Kumpsonier Sahib's cowardice in his teeth, and taunt him until he was forced for very shame to remain and do his business for himself?"

"By that saying," interrupted Jehanara, vexed at being selected to perpetrate an indiscretion, "thou betrayest thine ignorance, Narayan Sing. There is such a woman, and the doctor lady is she. She would tell the news to her husband, and leave him to reproach the Kumpsonier Sahib if he chose, and there would be no taunts, for the English are not wont to speak like the bazar folk. But there is another woman who would work for us, though ignorantly, and that is the wife of the Padri Sahib."

"The lady of the angry tongue!" cried Bahram Khan. "But what should induce my mother to send a slave to her?"

"It would not be likely, Highness, nor shall the Begum be troubled in the matter at all. I will disguise myself, and tell the Padri's Mem that her Highness, desiring to warn the doctor lady, was too closely watched to allow of her sending her usual messenger. I will say also that I succeeded in slipping away from Dera Gul, and in crossing the desert with the message, but that I dared not approach Nāth Sahib's house, fearing there might be spies among his servants. Thus, then, I will tell the news, and before very long the Padri's Mem will tell it also—in the ears of the Kumpsonier Sahib."

"It is well thought of," said Bahram Khan approvingly.

CHAPTER XII

HONOUR AND DUTY

THREE or four days later, Mrs. Hardy walked up the steps of the Norths' bungalow with a purposeful mien, and requested an interview with the Commissioner. Mr. Burgrave had finished his morning's work early, and his couch had been carried into the drawing-room verandah. A table was close at hand, with a volume of Browning lying upon it, and there was a chair placed ready for Mabel, but she was out riding with Fitz, to whom Dick, in utter forgetfulness of the idea Georgia had confided to him, had turned her over on finding that he himself was needed elsewhere. The Commissioner groaned impatiently when Mrs. Hardy was announced. It was not to enjoy the pleasure of a talk with her that he had hurried through his work, but he consoled himself with the thought that she would not stay long. No doubt the Padri was anxious to get a harmonium, or to enlarge the church, and they wanted him to head the subscription-list.

"Excuse my getting up," he said, as he shook hands with her. "My sapient boy has put my crutch just out of reach."

If the words were intended to convey a hint, Mrs. Hardy did not choose to take it, for she sat down deliberately between the crutch and its owner. Then, without any attempt at leading up to the subject, she said, with great distinctness—

"I have come to talk to you about your policy, Mr. Burgrave."

The Commissioner stared at her in undisguised astonishment. "Pardon me, but that is a subject I do not discuss with—with outsiders," he said.

"I only want to lay a few facts before you," pursued Mrs. Hardy, unmoved.

"No, no; excuse me. I cannot consent to discuss affairs of state with a lady."

"I mean you to listen to what I have to say, Mr. Burgrave, and I shall stay here until you do."

"I cannot run away," said Mr. Burgrave, with the best smile he could muster, and a glance at the crutch, "and when a lady is kind enough to come and talk to me, it would be rude to stop my ears. Perhaps you will be so good as to let me know your views at once, then, that your valuable time may not be wasted?"

"I should like to ask you, first of all, whether you know that your confidential report to the Government on the frontier question is common property at Dera Gul? Of course, if you choose to tell your secrets to Bahram Khan, and leave Major North in ignorance, I have no more to say."

To her great joy, Mrs. Hardy perceived that she had made an impression. The Commissioner looked startled and disturbed. "Im-

possible!" he said. "The report has been seen by no one but my secretary and the clerks who copied it."

"It is for you to find out who is to blame. I can only tell you what is going on, as it has just been told to me. I was in my garden about an hour ago, and a woman came out from behind the bushes—a miserable footsore creature. She told me she was a slave of the Hasrat Ali Begum's—Bahram Khan's mother—who had sent her to warn the Norths that you intend to withdraw the Nalapur subsidy, and leave Major North to face the consequences. However Bahram Khan obtained the information, he means to take advantage of it. She could not tell me what his plan is, but she seemed quite sure that it would end in a general rising, involving almost certain death to the Europeans in places like this. It was quite clear that she regarded you as a coward, running away and deliberately exposing others to danger. That is not my opinion"—Mrs. Hardy had seen the Commissioner wince—"but I thought you could not have looked at things in this light, and as soon as the poor creature was gone, I came to you at once."

"Confiding in Mrs. North by the way, no doubt?"

"No, I came straight to you. Now, let me ask you, have you realised the results of your action? You know that Major North will resign rather than countenance what we all feel would be a breach of faith, and yet you place him in a position in which he must do one thing or the other. I don't know what Miss North will think about it, but I know what I——"

"We will leave Miss North's name out of the conversation, if you please."

"Excuse me; we can't. How do you expect her to feel towards you when you set yourself deliberately to ruin her brother? You think worse of her than I do if you believe she will marry you after such a piece of cruel, unprovoked oppression."

"Mrs. Hardy, a lady is privileged——"

"Yes, I dare say you think I am taking an outrageous liberty, but I can't and won't be silent. All your interest in the frontier depends upon a pretty flighty girl who has no business there, and simply for the sake of showing your power you come and ride roughshod over us, whose lives are bound up in it. I know you're a proud man, Mr. Burgrave, and I don't ask you to reverse your policy publicly, which you would naturally object to do. But if this dreadful business has gone too far to be stopped, let Major North take a month's leave, and carry it through yourself. Then the people will see that he is not responsible for the breach of faith, and he will come back and be your right hand when you most need him. What good could a stranger do when all the tribes are out? Absolute ignorance of the country is not always the qualification it was in your case, you know. I know the frontier well—we used to itinerate in the district for years before we were allowed to settle down—and I am *certain* there's trouble coming. I can see it in the looks of the people, and hear it in the way they talk.

And here on the spot are the Norths, the very people to deal with a crisis, and you have done your best to undermine their influence already. Can't you stop there? What have they done that you should persecute them like this?"

"I have the highest possible respect for both Major and Mrs. North personally," said Mr. Burgrave slowly, "but personality is not politics."

"Up here it very often is. But come, Mr. Burgrave, if you don't absolutely hate the Norths, why not do as I suggest?"

"I assure you that every suggestion you have made shall receive the fullest consideration," replied the Commissioner in his best Secretarial manner. "I may rely on your silence as to the matter?"

Mrs. Hardy thought she detected a relenting in his tone. "Of course you may, if you are really going to do something. I am glad to find you open to conviction, if only for Miss North's sake and your own. You will have a very pretty wife, and I trust a happy one. Ah, there she is!" as the sound of horses' feet was heard, and Mabel, cantering past, waved her whip gaily to the watchers, "and riding with Mr. Anstruther!"

"Is there any reason why she should not ride with Mr. Anstruther?"

"His peace of mind, that's all. But perhaps you think he deserves no mercy? I may tell you I was glad to hear of your engagement, since it saved that nice young fellow for a better woman."

"A more fortunate woman, doubtless," corrected Mr. Burgrave with majestic forbearance. "A better there cannot be."

It was with mingled feelings that Mabel mounted the steps, after Fitz had ridden away. When he had appeared with the message that Dick was detained at the office, and had sent him to take her out, her first impulse was to refuse to go, but other counsels prevailed. Fitz had offered no congratulations on her engagement, and the omission rankled in her mind. When she started, she was nourishing a reckless determination to provoke a scene by asking him what he meant, but her courage oozed away very quickly. She would still have given much to discover what he thought of the whole situation, but she durst not venture upon an inquiry. He made no allusion to the important event which had occurred since their last ride, speaking of the Commissioner as readily as if she had no particular interest in him. Before they had been out long, she was content to accept his ruling, and conscious of a kind of horror in looking back upon the resolution with which she had started. She was on good terms with herself once more, and to such an extent did the oppressive effect of Mr. Burgrave's personality seem to be lightened at this distance, that she returned home feeling positively friendly towards him. It was unfortunate that Mrs. Hardy's disapproving glance, when she encountered her on the steps, should jar with this new mood of cheerfulness, and that there was another shock awaiting her when she looked into the drawing-room on her way to take off her habit.

"Little girl," said her lover, holding out his hand to draw her nearer him, "would you mind very much if I said I did not wish you to take these solitary rides with young Anstruther?"

The angry crimson leaped up into Mabel's forehead. "You have no right whatever to make such insinuations!" she cried hotly.

"Now, dearest, you mistake me. I make none—I should not dream of it. All I say is—doesn't it seem more suitable to you, yourself, that until I am able to ride with you, you should not go out except with your brother? You will do me the justice to believe that I am not jealous—I would not insult you by such a feeling—but other people will talk. Yes, I am jealous—for my little girl, not of her. No one must have the chance even of passing a remark upon her."

Mabel stood playing with her whip, her face flushed and her lips pressed closely together. "He would like to make life a prison for me, with himself as jailer!" she thought, as she bent the lash to meet the handle, making no attempt to listen to Mr. Burgrave, who went on talking of the high position his wife would occupy, of the difficulties of such a station, and of the love of scandal observable in the higher circles of Indian female officialdom.

"Why, you have broken your whip!" The words reached her ears at last. "Never mind, you shall have the best in Bombay as soon as it can come up here. You see what I mean, little girl, don't you?"

"Oh yes," said Mabel drearily. "You forbid me ever to ride with any one but you, or to speak to a man under seventy."

"Mabel!" he cried, deeply hurt, "can you really misjudge me so cruelly?"

"It's not that," she said, with a sudden impulse, kneeling down beside him. "I know how fond you are of me, and I can't tell you how grateful and ashamed it makes me. But you don't understand. You want to treat me like a baby, and I am a good deal more than grown-up. Think what I have gone through since I came here, even."

"I know, I know!" he said hoarsely. "Don't speak of it, my dearest. The thought of that evening in the nullah comes upon me sometimes at night, and turns me into an abject coward. I mean to take you away where you will be safe, and have no anxieties."

"Then have you never any anxieties? Because they will be mine."

"No," he said, with something of sternness, "my anxieties shall never touch my wife. I want to shake off my worries when I leave the office, and come home to find you the very embodiment of rest and peace—in a perfect house, with everything round you perfectly in keeping—sitting there in a perfect gown, long and soft and flowing, for me to feast my eyes upon."

He lingered lovingly over the contemplation of this ideal picture, to the details of which Mabel listened with a cold shudder. "My dear Eustace," she said brusquely, to hide her dismay, "please tell me how

you think the house and the servants are to be kept perfect, if I do nothing but trail round and strike attitudes in a tea-gown?" She caught his wounded look, and went on hastily. "And what did you mean by the invidious glance you cast at my habit? I won't have my things sniffed at."

"It's so horribly plain," pleaded the culprit.

"And why not?" demanded Mabel, touched in her tenderest point. "I'm sure it's most workmanlike."

"That's just it. Workmanlike—detestable! Why should a woman want to wear workmanlike clothes? All her things ought to be like that gown you wore at the Gymkhana, looking as if a touch would spoil them."

"I shall remind you of this in future, you absurd man!" laughed Mabel, regaining her cheerfulness as she thought she saw a way of reaching her point; "but please understand, once for all, that I shall choose my clothes myself—and they will be suitable for various occasions, for business as well as pleasure. Your part will only be to admire, and to pay."

"And that part will be punctually performed," said Mr. Burgrave indulgently, gazing in admiration into her animated face. "I know that you will remember my foolish prejudices, and gratify them to the utmost extent of my desires, if not of my purse. That is all I ask of you—to be always beautiful."

In her bitter disappointment Mabel could almost have struck him. "Oh, you won't understand! you won't understand!" she cried. "I don't want piles of clothes, I don't want everything softened and shaded down for me. I want to be a helpmate to my husband, as Georgia is to Dick."

"Dear child, I am sorry you have returned to this subject," said Mr. Burgrave, taken aback. "I thought we had threshed it out fully long ago."

"Ah, but we can speak more freely now!" she cried. "Don't you see that I should hate to be stuck up on a pedestal for you to look at, or to be a kind of pet, for you to amuse yourself smilingly with my foolish little interests out of office hours? I want you to tell me things, and let us talk them over together, as Dick and Georgia do."

"I know they do," said Mr. Burgrave, trying to smile. "The walls are so thin that I hear them at it every evening. A prolonged growl is your brother soliloquising, and a short interlude of higher tones is Mrs. North giving her opinion of affairs. It is a little embarrassing for me, knowing as I do that my doings are probably the subject of the conversation."

"Well, and if they are?" cried Mabel. "It is only because you and Dick don't understand one another that he and Georgia criticise you. Now think about this very matter of the frontier. If you would only talk to me, and tell me what you thought was the proper thing, I could talk to them, and you might find that you were not so much opposed

after all. Do try, please; oh do! I would give anything to bring you to an agreement."

Mr. Burggrave's brow was clouded as he looked into her eager eyes. "Am I to understand," he said, with dreadful distinctness, "that your brother and Mrs. North are trying to make use of you to extract information from me? No, I will not suspect your brother. No man would stoop to employ such an expedient, so degrading to my future wife, so affronting to myself. It is Mrs. North's doing."

Mabel, who had been listening in horrified silence, sprang to her feet at this point as if stung. "I think it will be as well for me to return you this," she said, laying upon the table the ring of "finest Europe make," which the Commissioner had been fain to purchase from the chief jeweller in the bazar as a makeshift until the diamond hoop for which he had sent to Bombay could arrive. "You have grossly insulted both my sister-in-law and me, and—and I never wish to speak to you again."

She had intended to sweep impressively from the room, but the angry tears that filled her eyes made her blunder against the table, and Mr. Burggrave, raising himself with a wild effort, caught her hand. "Mabel, come here," he said, and furious with herself for yielding, she obeyed. "Give me that ring, please." He restored it solemnly to its place on her finger. "Now we are on speaking terms again. Dear little girl, forgive me. I was wrong, unpardonably wrong, but I never thought your generous little heart would lead you so far in opposing my expressed wish. I admire the impulse, my darling, but when you come to know me better, you will understand how unlikely it is that I should yield to it. Come, dear, look sunny again, or must I make a heroic attempt to go down on my knees with one leg in splints?"

"Oh, if you would only understand!" sighed Mabel. She was kneeling beside him again, occupying quite undeservedly, as she felt, the position of the suppliant. "If only I could make you see——"

"See what?" he asked, taking her face in his hands and kissing it. "I see that my little girl thinks me an old brute. Won't she believe me if I assure her on my honour that I am trying to do the best I can for her brother, and that I hope I have found a way of putting things right?"

"Have you, really?" Her bright smile was a sufficient reward. "Oh, Eustace, if it's all happily settled, I shall love you for ever!"

The assurance did not seem to promise much that was new when the relative position of the parties was considered, but the unsolicited kiss bestowed upon him was very grateful to Mr. Burggrave, and he smiled kindly as he released her and bade her run away and change her habit. Mabel left the room gaily enough, but once outside, a sudden wave of recollection swept over her, and she wrung her hands wildly.

"I was free—free!" she cried to herself. "Just for a moment I was free, and I let him fetch me back. Oh, what can I do? I could be quite fond of him if he would let me, but he won't. If he wasn't so good I should delight to break it off in the most insulting way possible,

but his virtues are the worst thing about him. I hate them! Is this sort of thing to go on for a whole lifetime—beating against a stone wall, and bruising my hands, and then being kissed and given a sweet, and told not to cry? Mabel Louisa North, you are a silly fool, and you deserve just what you have got. I hate and despise you, and with my latest breath I shall say, Serve you right!"

"O Dick, has it come?" Georgia sprang up to meet her husband, as he entered the room with a gloomy face.

"No, but as far as I can see, it's close at hand. I can't quite make it out, but Burgrave seems to have altered his plans astonishingly. Instead of travelling down to the coast at once, he is going to stay here another week, and hold a durbar at Nalapur. I have to send word to Beltring to get the big *shamiana* put up at once in the Agency grounds, and to see that all the Sardars have notice. What does it mean?"

"He's going to see the thing through on his own account," said Georgia with conviction. "But it will make no difference to us, will it, Dick?"

"How could it? The breach of faith is the same, whether I announce it at first or merely come in afterwards to carry it out. I wish Burgrave hadn't such a mania for mysteries. Ismail Bakhsh tells me that he has been sending off official telegrams at a great rate all day, and yet, when I ventured to hint that some idea of the proposed proceedings at the durbar would be interesting, he turned rusty at once, and said he had not received his instructions. This system of government by thunderbolt doesn't suit me. It's enough to make a man chuck things up now, without waiting for the final blow."

"Oh, but you will stick on as long as you can? It is the only guarantee for the peace of the frontier."

"A wretchedly shaky one, then," said Dick, with an angry laugh. "Here's the Amir sending his mullah Aziz-ud-Din to say that he learns on incontestable authority that the subsidy is to be withdrawn, and imploring me to say whether I have any hand in it. The poor old fellow's faith in me is quite touching, but what could I say except that I knew nothing about it, and repeat the assurance I gave him before?"

"But what could Ashraf Ali mean by incontestable authority?"

"How can I tell? Some spy, I suppose. By the way, though, it didn't strike me. That must be what the Commissioner meant!"

"Why, what did he say?"

"He doesn't intend to stay on in this house. Now that he can be got into a cart, he thinks it better to return to his hired bungalow. I imagine I looked a bit wrathful, for he graciously explained that he had reason to believe we have spies among the servants here."

"Dick! you don't mean to say that he accused you——?"

"No, he was good enough to say that he had the best means of knowing I had nothing to do with it. But when I reminded him that all the servants, except those Mab brought with her from Bombay,

have been with us for years, he intimated that he made no accusations, but official matters had got out, and he meant to stop it. No doubt it was that sweet-seller fellow, as we thought."

"Well, I think the best thing the Commissioner can do is to go. It will give Mab a little peace."

"Yes, I shouldn't say she looked exactly festive."

"How could she? She feels that she has cut herself off from us, for of course we can't discuss things before her as we used, and I don't think she finds that he makes up for it. I have great hopes."

"Now, no coming between!" said Dick warningly, and Georgia laughed.

"I trust it won't be necessary," she said.

A week later she happened again to be sitting alone in the drawing-room, busy with the fine white work on which she expended so many hours and such loving care at this time, when Dick came in. To her astonishment, he was in uniform, and laid his sword upon the table by the door as he entered.

"Why, Dick, you are not going to Nalapur with the Commissioner after all?" she cried.

"Burgrave can't go, and I have got to hold the durbar instead."

"But how—what—?"

"It seems that he had a fearful blow-up with Tighe this morning, after taking it for granted all along that he would be allowed to leave off his splints and go. Tighe absolutely howled at the idea, told him that in moving from this house to his own he had jarred the knee so badly as to throw himself back for a week, and that the splints must stay on for some time yet. Of course he can't ride in them, and to take him through the mountains in a doolie would be madness."

"I wondered at his being allowed to ride so soon," said Georgia, "but I thought Dr. Tighe must have found him better than we expected. Of course I haven't seen the knee for some time lately. But did he tell you what the object of the durbar was?"

"He did. It is just what we thought it would be, Georgie."

"Nonsense!" cried Georgia sharply. "As if you would go to Nalapur in that case! Are you joking, Dick?"

His set face brought conviction reluctantly to her mind.

"You are not joking, and yet you came home, and got ready, just as if you meant to hold the durbar, and never told me!" she cried.

"I do mean to hold the durbar," said Dick. She sat stunned, and he went on. "I thought I wouldn't tell you till the last moment, because I knew how you would feel about it, and I didn't want to worry you more than could be helped."

"To worry me!" she repeated. "And yet you come and try to tease me with this absurd, impossible story? You are not going."

Dick looked her straight in the face. "But I am," he said.

"But you said you would resign first."

"I must resign afterwards, that's all. There are some things a man can't do, Georgie, and one is to desert in the face of the enemy."

"But it's wrong—dishonourable!"

"It's got to be done, and Burgrave has managed to get matters so arranged that I have to do it. I talked about resigning, and he said very huffily that he was not the person to receive my resignation, which is quite true. He anticipates danger, I can see, for he tells me he has had information that Bahram Khan has some sort of plot on hand, and do you expect me to hang back after that?"

"I never thought you would care about what people said. If it's right to resign, do it, and let them say what they like."

"If I wasn't a soldier I would, but I have no choice."

"No choice between right and wrong?"

"Not as a soldier. It isn't my business to criticise my orders, but to execute them. Oh, I know all you are thinking. I see it perfectly well, and from your point of view you are absolutely in the right, and as an individual I agree with you, but I am not my own master."

"And your personal honour?"

"I'm afraid it has got to look after itself. Don't think me a brute, Georgie. I want to be on your side, but I can't."

"Then I suppose it's no use my saying anything more?"

"I really think it would be better not. You see it would only make us both awfully uncomfortable, and do no good."

"Oh, don't!" burst from Georgia. "I can't bear to hear you talk like that. Remember your promise to Ashraf Ali. The poor old man has relied on that, and pledged himself to all the Sardars that the Government doesn't intend to forsake them. The whole honour of England is at stake. Dick, these people have learnt from you and my father to believe the word of an Englishman, and are you going to teach them to distrust it?"

"When you have quite finished—" began Dick.

"I can't, I can't! Oh, Dick, our own people, who know us and trust us! Have you the heart to forsake them? Dick, won't you listen to me? I have never urged you to do anything against your will before, but when it is a matter of right and conscience—! I know you believe you're right now, but how will you feel about it afterwards? Think of our friends betrayed, our name disgraced, through you!"

"Hang it, Georgie!" cried Dick, losing his temper, "you make a man feel such a cur. I tell you I have got to go."

"I wish I had died six years ago at Iskandarbagh, rather than lived to hear you say that."

He turned away without another word, and took up his sword from the table where he had laid it down. It was always Georgia's privilege to buckle the sword-belt for him, and she rose mechanically, rousing herself with an effort from her stupor of dismay. He took the strap roughly out of her hands.

"No," he said, "you'd better have nothing to do with it. The

blame is all mine at present, and you can keep your own conscience clear."

She sank upon a chair again and watched him miserably as he buckled on the sword and went out. On the threshold he looked back, softening a little.

"Graham has changed his mind and is not coming to the durbar. If there should be any attempt at a rising, you are to take refuge in the old fort. Tighe will come and sleep in the house these two nights if you are nervous."

"I'm not nervous," said Georgia indignantly.

"Oh, very well. After all, we shall be between you and Nalapur."

He crossed the hall to the front door, Georgia's strained nerves quivering afresh as his spurs clinked at each step. Suddenly she realised that he was gone, and that without bidding her farewell.

"Dick!" she cried faintly, "you are not going—like this?"

There was no answer, and she moved slowly to the window, supporting herself by the furniture. He was already mounted, and was giving his final directions to Ismail Bakhsh. The sight gave Georgia fresh strength, and stepping out on the verandah, she ran round the corner of the house. There was one place where he always turned and looked back as he rode out. He could not pass it unheeded even now, that spot, close to the gate of the compound, where she had so often waited for his return. As she stood grasping the verandah rail with both hands, the consciousness that for the first time in their married life he was leaving her in anger swept over her like a flood.

"Oh, it will kill me!" she moaned, seizing one of the pillars to support herself, but almost immediately another thought flashed into her mind. "No, he is not angry—my dear old Dick; he is only grieved. He durst not be kind to me, lest I should persuade him any more, and he should have to give way. God keep you, my darling!"

In the rush of happy tears that filled her eyes, the landscape was blotted out, and when she could see distinctly again, Dick had passed the gate. She could just distinguish the top of his helmet above the wall as he rode. He had gone by while she was not looking. Would it have been any comfort to her to know that he had looked back, and not seeing her, had ridden on faster?

"I had to behave like a brute, or I should have given in, and she didn't see it," he said to himself remorsefully. "Of course she was right, bless her! she always is, but I couldn't do anything else."

Her pale face haunted him, and had there been time he would have turned back, but he was obliged to hurry on. As he entered the town he came upon Dr. Tighe.

"Doctor," he said, laying a hand on the little man's shoulder, "look after my wife while I'm away. She's awfully cut up at my going like this."

"All right!" said the doctor cheerfully, "and don't you be frightened about her. Mrs. North is a sensible woman, and knows better than to go and make herself ill with fretting."

"The Memsahib parted from the Sahib without kissing him!" said one of the servants wonderingly to the rest.

"What foolish talk is this?" asked Mabel's bearer scornfully. "My last Memsahib never kissed the Sahib unless he had gained her favour by a gift of jewels."

The tone implied that the subject was dismissed as beneath contempt, but the man's actions did not altogether tally with it, for after loftily waving aside the assurance of the first speaker that this Sahib and Memsahib were not as others, he retired precipitately to his own quarters. Here a lanky youth, who was slumbering peacefully in the midst of a miscellaneous collection of goods, some of them belonging to Mabel, and others the bearer's own, was promptly roused by a kick.

"Hasten to Dera Gul with a message of good omen!" said the bearer, impelling his messenger firmly in the desired direction. "Nāth Sahib and the doctor lady have quarrelled, and until they meet again he is without the protection of her magic."

(To be continued.)

HANDEL, THE MAN

ANOTHER three years have gone, and the great Handel Festival at the Crystal Palace is upon us. Much will be written about Handel the musician; be it ours to write about Handel the man. "In character and person," says Sir Hubert Parry, "Handel was large and powerful. Even his appetite seems to have been like a giant's, while his temper was perfectly volcanic. Many characteristic and amusing stories are told of its explosions, for when he was roused he was entirely without respect of persons, and was quite as likely to rage and swear at a prince as at a drummer or a parish clerk." This is the Handel I propose to bring before the reader—the Handel of the Gargantuan appetite and the choleric temper; the Handel of a hundred good stories unknown for the most part to the bourgeois Briton who looks upon the "Messiah" as the greatest work of its kind that was ever given to the world.

At the outset it may perhaps be well to recall very briefly the main incidents of the composer's career. English people know so little of Handel, and they ought to know so much; for Handel was English in everything but in the accident of his birth in Saxony. He resided in England during almost the whole of his working life, adopted England as his country by becoming naturalised, wrote almost all his great works in England and to English words; and, gathering up all that had gone before him in English music, embodied it in himself, and practically became the founder of modern English art. Thus are we justified in making some attempt to place him once more on the borders of the living land.

Born at the quaint old town of Halle, about an hour's ride from Leipzig, in 1685, George Frederick Handel was meant by his practical parent for a lawyer. But George Frederick would have nothing to do with law, which he detested as much as Carlyle did after making acquaintance with that "bogpool of disgust" in Edinburgh. He had managed somehow to conceal an old spinet away up in the attics, and when the rest of the household had gone to sleep he would steal quietly to the instrument, and practise his fingers on it until his eyes refused to keep open. The father knew nothing of what was going on, but music will out as well as murder, and one day Doctor Handel was perfectly astounded to find his son playing the organ in a masterly manner at the neighbouring residence of the Duke of Sax-Weissenfels. The Duke was a sensible person. He saw the manifest bent of young Handel's genius, and he represented to the father that it would be nothing short of cruelty to debar him from the systematic study of

music. So young Handel was at once put under the care of the organist in the Cathedral Church of his little town. He studied harmony and counterpoint, and canon and fugue, and all the other dry bones of music; perfected himself in the practice of the organ and the harpsichord, learnt the oboe and the violin, and began to compose.

Presently his father died, and he went to Hamburg as a violinist in the opera-house. In this capacity he drudged away for some time, and then set off for Italy, where he remained, composing operas and other works, for about three years. Returning to Germany in 1710, he was made chapel-master to the Elector of Hanover, who subsequently became our George I. That same year he paid his first visit to England, and in 1711 his "Rinaldo" was produced at the Haymarket with extraordinary success. After an absence in Hanover, he came back to England in 1717, and in England he remained until the end of his days. His first important post was at the chapel of the magnificent Duke of Chandos at Cannons, where he directed the music and produced his first English oratorio, "Esther." In 1720 an attempt was made to revive Italian opera in the metropolis, and an association of persons, under the absurd title of the Royal Academy of Music—not to be confounded with the existing institution of that name—was founded to promote the scheme, with Handel as musical director and composer. For this combination Handel wrote a large number of operas, all forgotten now, but the financial side of the undertaking turned out so badly that the composer twice became bankrupt. It was this circumstance that led him to take to oratorio; hence we may safely say that if Handel had not ruined himself by operatic speculation there would have been no Handel Festivals to-day. For Handel lives entirely by his oratorios—by the "Messiah," by "Israel in Egypt," by "Samson," and by "Judas Maccabæus." In the absence of these his name would have long since passed into oblivion. Fortunately he was immensely successful with his oratorios, with the "Messiah," especially, which was first produced in Dublin in 1742, having been previously rejected in London. During the last seven or eight years of his life he was afflicted with total blindness, a calamity which he bore with the greatest fortitude. He died at his house in Brook Street on the Good Friday of 1759, and was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey, where a monument by Roubiliac was erected above his grave, representing him in the act of writing "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Good judges have pronounced this monument to be one of the most faithful presentments of the composer in existence, and it is well known that the sculptor did his best to secure fidelity by making use of a mask after death.

So much for Handel the musician; now we are ready to look more particularly at Handel the man. Suppose we begin with his experiences in the way of managing his singers at the Italian Opera. Singers are proverbially touchy and troublesome; none more so than operatic "stars," who are a continual thorn in the flesh of the *impresario*.

In Handel they found more than their match. His first encounter seems to have been with Francesca Cuzzoni, a distinguished Italian vocalist, who, from being the reigning star of her day, ended by making silk buttons for a living. Many pungent tales are told of her temper, quite apart from her connection with Handel. One of these may be cited. It appears that an English gentleman was so struck by her beauty and her singing that he became quite a slave to her. She made him pay for his devotion in the form of costly presents, and one day she begged of him a complete costume in point lace. When the costume arrived it did not meet with her ladyship's approval, and, uttering some insolent threat as to her admirer's "meanness," she straightway threw the whole suit on to the fire! This was the woman that Handel had the hardihood to engage for his enterprise. Horace Walpole describes her as "short and squat, with a cross face but fine complexion," adding that she "dressed ill, and was silly and fantastical." Handel's first experience of her temper was when she flatly refused to sing an air which he had written expressly for her. It was a case of Greek meeting Greek. "I know, madam, that you are a very devil," said Handel, "but I will let you see that I am Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." And with that he seized her in his arms and prepared to throw her out of the window. Of course she was too terrified to resist further, and she sang the song in question in exact accordance with the composer's directions. Something of the same kind happened later on with Carestini, who refused to sing an air which Handel had written with the express purpose of showing off the beauty of his voice. "You dog!" he cried, "don't I know better as yourself what is good for you to sing? If you will not sing all the songs I give you, I will not pay you ein stiver." And as had happened with Cuzzoni, that particular song was the one in which Carestini produced his greatest effect.

Handel's determined boldness was further illustrated by his engagement of Faustina, who was Cuzzoni's deadly rival. How he could have hoped to get the pair into the same cast it is difficult to imagine. Horace Walpole tells a very amusing story of his mother's, Lady Walpole's, attempts to keep the peace between them. On Sundays, when Sir Robert Walpole was absent, she used to invite them both to dinner, and by discreet diplomacy obtained sufficient concession from either side to ensure a pleasant meeting. One evening, however, when all the rank and fashion of London were present at one of her receptions, she found it so difficult to settle the question of precedence between the rival claimants, neither of whom could be prevailed upon to relinquish the *pas*, that she had almost given up all hope of hearing them sing, when by a lucky inspiration she tempted Faustina to a distant room, under pretence of showing her some curious china. Cuzzoni, supposing that her opponent had quitted the field, now consented to sing to the company; and when her songs were finished, Lady Walpole spirited her away upon a similar pretext, while her guests listened to the performance of Faustina. Of course at the

opera no such expedients were practicable, and Handel's ruse was to compose duets for the rivals in which the voice parts were "so nicely balanced, and crossed each other so frequently, for the purpose of giving each singer the upper part by turns, that it was quite impossible to say which was singing first and which second." After this, who shall contend that Handel was deficient in humour? Each of these "stars," it is said, received two thousand guineas per annum for her services. Hawkins declares that Cuzzoni had taken a solemn oath never to sing for a less sum than Faustina; and that Handel, wishing after a time to dismiss her, offered her 2000 guineas and Faustina 2001, whereupon she retired from the engagement. Knowing what we do of operatic stars, there seems no reason to doubt the story. Nor is there any reason to doubt that other story which represents one of his singers getting into a passion with Handel because the composer did not accompany him quite to his taste. "If you do not change your style of accompaniment," said the irate vocalist, "I will jump upon the harpsichord and smash it." Handel looked up with a twinkle in his eye. "Let me know when you will do that," he remarked, "and I will advertise it. I am sure more people will come to see you jump than will come to hear you sing."

Admirers of Uncle Toby know how terribly our army swore in Flanders. Handel, when he was in a passion, swore terribly too, and the circumstance has given pain to many worthy people who desire to look upon the composer of the "Messiah" as a religious person. The worthy people forget that everybody swore more or less in those days—swore in a way that, to quote Thackeray, would "make your hair stand on end." They thought no more of it than we think now of the *Mon Dieu* of a French school-girl. There is no doubt whatever that Handel was a man of deeply religious temperament, and no reasonable person would imagine that his chances of heaven were in any way minimised by the occasional luridness of his language. It certainly must have been very amusing—that is, to the person not concerned—to see Handel in a passion, throwing about his expletives in three or four different languages. Take, for example, that story told by Dr. Busby. We have all heard of the dusky potentate who liked the tuning-up far better than the concert which followed. Handel took a different view of it: his nerves, in fact, were too irritable to endure the sound of tuning, and the musicians who played in his orchestra accordingly tuned their instruments before his arrival. One evening, when the Prince of Wales was expected to be present, some wag, for a piece of fun, untuned them all. As soon as the Prince arrived Handel gave the signal to begin, *con spirito*, but such was the horrible discord that the enraged musician started up from his seat, and, having overturned a double-bass which stood in the way, seized a kettle-drum, which he threw with such force at the leader of the band that he lost his full-bottomed wig in the effort. Without waiting to replace it, he advanced bareheaded to the front of the orchestra,

breathing vengeance, but so choked with passion that he could hardly utter a word. In this ridiculous attitude he stood, staring and stamping, for some moments, amidst the general convulsion of laughter; nor could he be prevailed upon to resume his seat until the Prince went in person, and with much difficulty appeased his wrath. Prince or plebeian, it was all the same to Handel. "At the close of an air," says Dr. Burney, "the voice with which he used to cry out 'Chorus!' was very formidable indeed; and at the rehearsals of his oratorios at Carlton House, if the Prince and Princess of Wales were not exact in coming to the Music-room, he used to be very violent. Yet such was the reverence with which his Royal Highness treated him that, admitting Handel to have had cause of complaint, he has been heard to say: 'Indeed, it is cruel to have kept these poor people,' meaning the performers, 'so long from their scholars and other concerns.' But, if the maids of honour, or any other female attendant, talked during the performance, I fear that our modern Timotheus not only swore, but called names; yet, at such times, the Princess of Wales, with her accustomed mildness and benignity, used to say, 'Hush! hush! Handel is in a passion.'" Handel's behaviour to royalties was sometimes, indeed, not quite justifiable on the score of courtesy. Witness his conduct towards a certain foreign potentate at Aix-la-Chapelle. Being informed at the Spa that the King of Prussia was expected, and proposed to be witness of his musical powers, to the great disappointment of the monarch he quitted the place some days before his arrival.

Of course this action may have been prompted by modesty, for Handel, like all great geniuses, had a very humble opinion of his own powers. Several stories might be quoted in illustration of this, but two will suffice. Soon after he had completed the famous "See the conquering hero comes," he played it over to a friend and then asked him how he liked it. "Not so well as some things I have heard of yours," was the candid reply. "Nor I, either," said Handel, "but you will live to see it a greater favourite with the people than my other finer things." The second story is even better. While Marylebone Gardens were still flourishing, Handel's music was often heard from the orchestra there. One evening as the composer and a friend of his, Mr. Fountayne, were walking together in the gardens, a new piece was struck up by the band. "Come, Mr. Fountayne," said Handel, "let us sit down and listen to this piece; I want to have your opinion about it." Down they sat, and after a time the old parson, turning to his companion, said, "It is not worth listening to; it's very poor stuff." "You are right, Mr. Fountayne," said Handel, "it is very poor stuff; I thought so myself when I had finished it." The old gentleman was naturally taken by surprise and was beginning to apologise, when Handel cut him short by assuring him that the opinion given was really as correct as it was honest.

It is but right to say, however, that Handel had but scant toleration for the opinions of musical amateurs, especially if they were clerical amateurs.

In this connection his maxim emphatically was *Ne sutor ultra crepidam*. A certain Rev. Mr. Felton had published a set of organ concertos. They were so well received that he opened a subscription for a second set, and begged of Mr. Brown, the leader of his Majesty's band, to solicit Handel's permission to insert his name in the list of subscribers. Brown, who had been in great favour with Handel the winter before, had no doubt of success; but, upon mentioning to him Felton's request as delicately as possible one morning when he was shaving, he quite roused the lion in Handel by intimating incautiously that the composer was a clergyman. Putting the barber's hand aside, the great musician got up in a fury, and, with his face still in a lather, cried with terrifying vehemence: "Damn yourself, and go to der Teufel! A parson make concertos! Why, he no make sermons!" Handel, however, was not always quite consistent. At the coronation of George II., for example, the Bishops, having chosen the words for the anthem, sent them to Handel to be set to music. This was the occasion for another characteristic outburst. "I have read my Bible very well, and shall choose for myself," was the message he sent back with the Bishops' manuscript. Handel was his own librettist in a good many cases, notably in the "Messiah," but now and again he did call in the help of an outsider, not always with satisfactory results. A certain Dr. Morell had provided him with a text, and when it had been set he went to hear the music. Something did not quite please him, and he ventured to say so. "What!" screamed Handel in a white heat; "you teach me music? The music is good music. Damn your words. Here," he continued, strumming on the harpsichord, "here are my ideas; go and make words to them." Never, surely, was librettist more effectually silenced.

To fellow-musicians Handel was sometimes just and sometimes unjust. When Gluck first came to England in 1745, he was neither so great a composer nor so high in reputation as he afterwards mounted. Mrs. Cibber asked Handel what sort of composer he was, and was answered with an oath that "Gluck knows no more of counterpoint as mein cook, Waltz." This was substantially true, but it sounds rather illiberal all the same. There is another story, more amusing, but showing the same tendency to be severe on a brother composer. Dr. Maurice Greene having solicited Handel's perusal and opinion of a solo anthem which he had just finished, was invited by the great German to take his coffee with him the next morning, when he would say what he thought of it. The Doctor was punctual in his attendance; the coffee was served, and a variety of topics discussed, but not a word said by Handel concerning the composition. At length Greene, whose patience was exhausted, said, with an eagerness and an anxiety which he could no longer conceal: "Well, sir, but my anthem—what do you think of it?" "Oh! your anthem. Ah! I did think that it wanted air (tune)." "Air?" said Greene. "Yes, air; and so I did hang it out of the window." This same Greene was the subject of another

Handel story. Greene had set up a series of rival concerts at the Devil Tavern, near Temple Bar. The temptation to joke was too great for Handel. "Poor Dr. Greene," said he, "has gone to the devil."

Handel, in truth, made very familiar with the devil in his talk. There used to be an orchestral instrument called the "serpent." It is said to have been invented in France as early as the year 1590, but it is clear that Handel did not become acquainted with it until long after his settlement in England. A story was once current to the effect that when he first heard it he asked, "What the devil be that?" His interlocutor explained to him that it was a new instrument called the serpent. "Oh! the serpent," he replied; "aye, but it not be the serpent what seduced Eve." For public honours Handel cared very little. In the year 1733 he was invited by the Vice-Chancellor to give some performances in the theatre of the University of Oxford. He prepared a new oratorio specially for the occasion, and was subsequently offered a doctor's degree as a sort of return for the favour. The degree would have cost him about £100 in fees, and he wisely declined it. "What the devil I throw my money away for that the blockhead wish?" he said. "I no want it." He could be very sarcastic on occasion. When his "Theodora" was first produced at Covent Garden it was received by very poor houses. Burney says the composer was glad "if any professor who did not perform would accept of tickets or orders for admission." Two gentlemen of that description declined the orders. Later on they went to Handel and asked for an order to hear the "Messiah." "Oh, your servant, mine herren," he remarked, "you are damnably dainty. You would not go to 'Theodora'; there was room enough to dance there when that was perform." He must have been bitterly annoyed by the failure of "Theodora" (it contains that lovely air, "Angels, ever bright and fair"), yet he bore the misfortune like a true philosopher. One night Burney heard him say, in answer to a remark that the house was very empty, "Never mind, the music will sound the better." To some one else he declared that the Jews would not come to hear "Theodora" as they had come to hear "Judas Maccabæus," because it was a Christian story, and the ladies would not come to it because it was a virtuous one!

Handel's practical goodwill towards the Foundling Hospital has often been referred to by those who have written of his career. He caused a fair copy of the "Messiah" to be transcribed by his amanuensis for the exclusive use of the Hospital, and this is still preserved among the archives of the institution. Moreover, he promised the governors that he would give an annual performance of the oratorio, as long as he lived, on behalf of the charity. The governors appear to have seen in this a means of obtaining some legal recognition of their supposed rights in the matter of the "Messiah," and in order to have these rights properly safeguarded they drew up a

petition for presentation to Parliament. When the document was shown to Handel he was furious. "The devil!" he cried, "for what shall the Foundlings put mine oratorio in the Parliament? The devil! mine music shall not go to the Parliament." And it did not go; though, angry as he was, Handel was too good a Christian to suffer the outrage on his personal feelings to affect the continuance of his large-hearted charity.

We spoke at the outset of Handel's Gargantuan appetite. There is no doubt about his capacity in this direction, but of course it does not follow that because he was a great eater, he was necessarily by nature sensual. His biographer, Mr. Rockstro, did not need to point out that excessive brain-work cannot be maintained without a large supply of physical nutriment. The family of one of the greatest statesmen of modern times noticed that his appetite—always abnormally large—was to a great extent regulated by the importance of the measures he was bringing forward in Parliament. Yet he was neither a *gourmand* nor a *gourmet*. He ate to think, as Diogenes ate to live. And so did Handel. The stories told of his gluttony are very likely exaggerated, but readers must judge for themselves. The most familiar anecdote is that which represents him as going to a certain tavern and ordering beforehand a dinner for three persons. At the appointed hour Handel sat down at the table, and expressed his astonishment that the dinner was not brought up. "It shall come up, sir," said the host, "immediately the company arrives." "Then bring up the dinner *prestissimo*," replied the composer; "I am the company." The Mr. Brown already mentioned used to tell several stories of Handel's love of good cheer, liquid and solid. Of the former he gave an instance, which was accidentally discovered at his own house in Brook Street, where Brown, among other performers during the oratorio season, was at dinner. During the repast Handel often cried out: "Oh! I have the thought;" when the company, unwilling that, out of civility to them, the public should be robbed of anything so valuable as his musical ideas, begged he would retire and write them down. Handel complied with the request so frequently, that at last one of the most suspicious of the company had the curiosity to peep through the key-hole into the adjoining room, when he perceived that these "thoughts" were only bestowed on a fresh hamper of Burgundy which, as was afterwards discovered, he had received in a present from his friend Lord Radnor, while his company was regaled with more generous and spirited port! Some cynic has said that all anecdotes are lies: this particular anecdote suggests that he may be right.

Handel remained a bachelor to the end of his days, but that does not mean that he was proof against the tender passion. When he was quite a young man he trudged to Lübeck to compete for an organ appointment. The instrument, he found, was good, the duties were light, and the salary was substantial. But—there is always a but—one of the conditions of the appointment was that the successful

candidate should marry the retiring organist's daughter! It is said that the lady was not, like the apples in Paradise, "pleasant to the eyes"; and at any rate Handel did not want a wife at this particular time, and so declined the post when it was offered to him. Later on, when he was in Italy, a certain Vittoria Tesi took his fancy to such an extent that he became engaged to her, but the match, for some reason or other, was broken off. Subsequently he would have married an English lady of large property if she had not insisted that he should give up the practice of his art. Perhaps it was as well that he remained single. He might have done as Beethoven did with his cook, and thrown the soup in his wife's face when something went wrong with his temper.

J. CUTHBERT HADDEN.

MRS. DIMSON'S DIAMOND JUBILEE

TEMPERANCE WELLER was born on the twenty-fourth of May 1819, but it was not until the Princess Victoria became Queen in 1837 that this important coincidence was noticed in the little west-country village of Barkworth, where lived Temperance's mother, known for some distance round for her excellence among washerwomen.

"There now!—to think as our Temper'nce were born same day as the Queen, and we never know'd it, nor she neither, though maybe she'd been pleased enough if she did," said Mrs. Weller over her wash-tub to her cronies.

"Like enough," they answered, their minds failing to grasp the fact that amongst the Queen's subjects there might be others who shared with Temperance the honour of the day.

For some time this local notoriety did Temperance no harm, but by-and-by, when the Queen's marriage began to be talked about, there were many in Barkworth who said—

"Now, Temper'nce! why don't you get tied up same day as the Queen?"

Although she did not particularly care about it, Temperance began to feel that if she did not follow the Royal example she would be considered a failure amongst the young men and maidens of her own village. It was not that she was without lovers, for she was a comely girl, tall and broad shouldered, with a fresh colour and clear grey eyes; but she was in no hurry, for Fred Barnes, whom she liked better than any one else, was a slow and backward wooer; while for Joe Dimson, who was ready enough to be married, or anything else by way of "a lark," she had never felt more than a sort of good comradeship.

But what was a girl to do when her companions buzzed round her and urged that it would be hard indeed if she could not find a husband, and give them all a feast on the Queen's wedding-day? Fred Barnes, for his part following the plough, "dreamed in his soul of a better and fairer day" when he might take a wife. That dream-wife had always the face of Temperance. But now, and perhaps for years to come, he had to keep his old father and mother, and put aside the thought of wife and children. Then—when the man she loved held back, and she knew his reasons though she chose to be offended at them—Temperance made the great mistake of her life. She allowed herself to be persuaded to marry Joe Dimson on the Queen's wedding-day; and in the whole village there was no heart so heavy as that of the young bride when she saw the man whom she truly loved stand gaping at

her in his smock-frock, as she passed down the church path on the arm of her husband, in his smart coat, Bristol-made.

But from the first there was little brightness in Temperance Dimson's life. Joe had always been too fond of the public-house, but had assured her that when he had a wife and home of his own he should no longer be tempted. For a while this was so, but it did not last long. His old companions jeered at him, declared that if he'd married the Queen herself he couldn't have been more under government, abused him for being too "near" to stand treat for them as of old, and succeeded without much difficulty in overcoming all his feeble scruples, and thought themselves fine fellows when they had made "his last estate worse than his first."

By the time her first child was a few months old Mrs. Dimson found that to keep the household from absolute want she must go back to her place at her mother's wash-tubs, which she had given up on her marriage. Joe lost one berth after another from drunkenness, and although he grumbled and swore at the comfortless home when his wife was away earning his bread, he did nothing to prevent her from going, knowing that it was only a choice between that and starvation.

There was one thing for which Mrs. Dimson felt truly thankful, and that was, that she did not resemble the Queen in the number of her family. Two little girls were born in the first three years of her marriage, after that a boy, who died in infancy. But she had no more children, and as things went from bad to worse with her husband it was as much as she could do to keep even her small family in bread.

Eight years dragged slowly away, and then the heaviest of her burdens fell from her tired shoulders. Joe had been offered a job of harvesting by one of the farmers who was short-handed, and although he hated work with a deadly hatred, and had quite got over the shame of being supported by his wife, he thought it might be worth while to work for a few days for the sake of the "spree" which would follow; only he omitted the precaution of keeping sober until the job was finished, and on the second evening he was carried home to his wife—dead. He had fallen from the top of a loaded waggon, to which he had climbed in drunken bravado, and had been killed on the spot.

After this followed many peaceful years. Mrs Dimson did not marry a second time, although her old lover, Fred Barnes, who had stayed single for her sake, plucked up his courage and asked her again and again. She had "no stomach for married life," she said; she and Jane and Lizzy were happy enough together, and as her old mother was now past work, she went to live with her, and took over the washing on her own account.

So Mrs. Dimson worked and prospered for more than twenty years. Both her daughters married comfortably. One of them lived with her and helped her until her working days came to an end from an attack of rheumatic fever, through which she struggled back to comparative health, but with a weak heart and crippled hands. Now came the

time when her years of labour and difficulty were rewarded. Her daughter Jane, who lived with her, was married to Robert Hurrell, the blacksmith. They were well-to-do, and had no children. Never was an old woman better cared for than she was by them; while as for Lizzy, whose husband was a grocer in London, she wanted to send down from the shop twice as many good things as her mother could consume, and also sent her a weekly paper with as much as possible of the Queen's doings in it; for although Mrs. Dimson was a bad reader she could enjoy the pictures, and Robert or Jane read the news to her in the evenings, so that she could faithfully follow the movements of her Royal contemporary and feel with her in her joys and sorrows. So it seemed to her that year by year they were more closely bound together by an invisible bond.

In the year of the Queen's Jubilee, in 1887, Mrs. Dimson had been at the worst of her illness, and had been unable to share in the village festivities at Barkworth. "Maybe, please God, I'll live to hear the bells ring for her, pretty dear! and then I can go in peace," she said to her daughter a day or two before. But Jane would not hear of her dying.

"We've got to pay you back a bit yet, mother, for all you've done for us, and I don't believe you'll die till we've had the chance." Then the rector sent her a bottle of champagne to drink the Queen's health. It seemed to put new life into her, and she began to get better from that day.

In the early part of the year 1897, when the Queen's Diamond Jubilee was being discussed, a great idea came into the head of Mrs. Dimson's daughter Lizzy, whose husband, George Barker, kept a grocer's shop in the Borough High Street. Why not get her mother up to town and let her see the show, which would pass their house? Who could have a better right to see it than a woman who was born and married on the same day as the Queen? The Barkers lived over the shop, and hoped to make "a good bit of money" by letting some of their windows for the day, but they meant to reserve one for themselves, and there would be room for "mother and Jane, and they could make shift for a few nights in a little back-room." Mrs. Barker talked it over with her husband, and plans were made.

When Mrs. Dimson received her daughter's invitation, she felt at once that it was the right and proper thing that it should be given and accepted.

"Jenny, Jenny! To think that now I'll see her blessed face at last after waiting seventy-eight years! I thought as I could go in peace when I heard the bells ringin' for her ten years ago, but I believe the Lord has kept me alive a-purpose to see her, and you and me'll go comfortable enough and stop with Lizzy."

But although Mrs. Dimson felt no doubt of her own strength for the undertaking, her daughter Jane had many fears, and on the evening of the day when the letter arrived she went quietly to the doctor to ask his opinion and advice.

"Well, Mrs. Hurrell!" he said, "it's a risk, a great risk, with your mother's heart so weak, and I could wish it had not been put into her head, but I expect there will be no getting it out again now, and if she's disappointed, it's as likely as not she will fret herself ill. However, I will look round in the morning and see how she is, and talk it over with her, and judge if she is in any way fit for it."

Fit for it Mrs. Dimson stoutly declared she was and meant to be, and no one could find it in their heart to dispute it. "Keep her as quiet as you can," the doctor said after his talk with her, but he said no more, for at seventy-eight why should she be denied the strongest desire of her life?

There was much excitement in Barkworth over Mrs. Dimson's intended journey. It was a matter in which the whole village seemed to have a part, and Mrs. Hurrell had great difficulty in saving her mother from frequent and fatiguing visitors who came to discuss the grand subject, with many a "La' now!" and "There! to think of it!" But Mrs. Walsh, the squire's wife, came with a present of a beautiful white China silk shawl, and gave a promise to send Mrs. Dimson to the station in her own carriage. Then Mrs. Allen, the rector's wife, had a wonderful cap made for her with quillings of soft white net, and little loops of "baby" ribbon, and Mrs. Dimson cried softly over it with delight, and bid Jane remember that she was to wear it for her "buryn'."

"Just wrap the shawl round me, Jenny," she added, "and I shan't be 'shamed to meet the Lord Almighty any time as He likes to call for me."

Mrs. Dimson set out for her first visit to London on Saturday the 19th of June, and in spite of grey weather and frequent showers she enjoyed every mile of the journey. At last, when she saw the streets decked with gay wreaths and waving flags, she said "It 'minded her somehow o' the Pilgrim's Progress, and she seemed pretty nigh the Celestial City."

The Barkers could hardly make enough of their visitors when they arrived tired but cheerful after their long journey. Lizzy, in spite of her twelve years of married life in London, was as simple and countrified as when she left Barkworth, and had lost nothing of her pride in her mother. On Sunday afternoon Mrs. Dimson sat in state in her white shawl and cap, and received with simple dignity such friends of her daughter's as were privileged to call upon her.

"I doubt the Queen's had more fuss made over her ner me, Jenny," she said when she was going to bed, and her daughter answered—

"The Prince of Wales and all the family couldn't think more of their mother ner we do, ner ha'n't more reason, I'll be bound." So, with contented hearts and wholesome pride, they went to sleep.

Mrs. Barker with infinite pains, and with help and suggestions from her husband and boys, had prepared a surprise for Monday in the shape of a flag, which was to be hung from the window from which Mrs. Dimson was to see the procession.

The flag was only made of white glazed calico, but on it were sewn the letters V.R. of a large size, in scarlet braid, and underneath them a modest and unassuming T. D. To the mind of the Barker family Victoria Regina was as much a Christian and surname as Temperance Dimson. It appeared to them the climax of all that was suitable that the initials should thus appear together.

The day, the great day, dawned at last, grey and warm, a little depressing at first, but with promise of improvement. The Barker family were astir early, for the occupants of their windows intended to be in good time, and get the most for their money, but Mrs. Dimson was allowed to rest in peace as long as possible in her little bedroom at the back of the house. Jane brought her breakfast, helped her in the deeply important matter of dressing, and took care that she should be at the window in good time to see the very beginning of the procession.

The sun shone out as Mrs. Dimson took her place and gazed at the scene below in wondering awe. She was very silent, and held tightly to her daughter's hand when the cheering began, and as the troops marched by she said, "It must ha' bin like this, Jenny, when King Solomon went up to Jerusalem wi' all his horsemen, and that great big man there in front might 'a' bin the king himself by the looks of 'em." Half to herself she murmured, "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off." Jane did not quite follow the thought, but it seemed to her very beautiful, and she remembered it afterwards.

At length came the moment, the great moment, of Mrs. Dimson's life. At the deafening roar of enthusiasm—as from the "heart of one man"—which greeted the Queen's appearance, she turned pale and trembled, but quickly recovered herself, and leaned forward waving her handkerchief. At that moment the Queen looked up and bowed. Whether the dignified figure of the old country-woman really caught her eye or not is of little consequence, she seemed to look right at her. Happy tears filling Mrs. Dimson's eyes, she saw no more.

"I'll go and rest a bit now, Lizzy," she said, rising slowly and feebly from her chair, and both her daughters went with her.

"I'm glad we come, Jenny! I see'd her and she see'd me. I don't doubt o' that, she see'd me! She smiled and bowed at me, and that I hold to, and don't you never let your boys forget, Lizzy, that the Queen herself smiled and bowed at their granny. Now you both go back, gals, and watch the show, and I'll rest."

Then they took off her grand cap and laid it on the table beside her bed, and covered her up and kissed her, and went back to their friends.

An hour later they went softly in to see if she slept. Jane went first and bent over her.

"Lizzy!" she cried a moment after, in a voice of awe, "Lizzy, she's gone!"

Gone! It was the truth. A poor, poor life; and yet a life fulfilled.

HOPE STANFORD.

LETTERS FROM THE NORTH

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF "IN THE VALLEY OF THE RHONE," ETC., ETC.

CARE AMICE,—The woman at her spinning-wheel looked round the corner of her brown hut, and her face was startlingly of the same brown colour. Her silver piece had been carefully consigned to the corner of her handkerchief, and safely pocketed; and, as she gazed after the retreating traveller, it was evident that she felt L. would make a very fine guardsman: equally evident that her admiration for the writer was centred in the silver coin. She was possibly a philosopher, arguing that what nature had denied in inches was made up in largeness of heart.

Having settled this satisfactorily with herself the good woman went back to her seat and her spinning, and left us and our carriages to go swiftly bowling down the hill.

Sandene lay before us, stretched out like a map. A row of houses bordered the water, and on the opposite side hills rose in long undulating outlines, their reflections mirrored in the lake. A hundred yards beyond Gloppen's hotel the little boat at the pier was getting up steam, looking like a magnified toy.

The other hotel is Sivertsen's, at the south-east end of the lake, charmingly placed amidst trees and verdure, and in a more retired situation. We had found the Sivertsen hotels good and comfortable, but as we had only time to dine at Sandene and go on board, we patronised Gloppen's for the occasion. Much to our regret. The dinner was shockingly bad, and we rose up from table more hungry than we had sat down. After our Egge experience it was depressing. L. looked volumes, and the volumes were all tragedies.

"We have still half-an-hour at our disposal," he said. "I think I will go in and make my will. You will take charge of it, and act as my executor. I have little to leave beyond my blessing, it is true, but even that requires a careful and reverend administration. And you will accompany my remains to England—they will be all vacuum, and therefore you will have no excess of luggage to pay. It is the last favour I ask of you."

At this moment a fine point for photographing struck him; he quite forgot his dying condition, and in a moment was all energy, fire and enthusiasm.

"I can just imagine the pleasure of developing this," he said, "and seeing it all come out, when I get back to England."

"Do you mean to develop it in Ghostland?" I asked. "And shall you send it back to me in the form of spirit-photographs?"

"Ghostland?" he cried; "and spirit-photos? What do you mean? Oh! I see," his dying state just dawning upon him. "Well, I have changed my mind, and shall try to exist a little longer. This is really a very fine view," pointing to the water, the opposite hills, and a row of boat-houses on the white, glittering sand. "Nevertheless, I don't feel any desire to remain here, such as we felt at Red and Skei."

Certainly the human element made it much more commonplace and distracting. There was quite a small crowd at the hotel, and outside, sitting in a row one beside the other, just as we had seen them walking in a row one behind the other, were the four French people we had met last night at Egge, who had *not* devoured our chef's artistic dinner and left us empty dishes. Whether they had passed the intervening hours at Red, or Sandene, or encamped in the open fields, we could not tell. From their appearance the latter seemed probable.

"Untidy, draggletailed, and disorganised," said L., summing them up rather too severely on our arrival—he loves to pile up the adjectives. "The son looks vagabondish, the daughter dissipated, the father and mother depressed. They evidently have a bad time of it with the juveniles. Surely human nature has very much degenerated on the whole since the days of creation."

It was then that dinner was announced, and the small crowd streamed in, and two long tables were filled up.

At our table were some very funny people who were staying at the inn, and rather murdered the Queen's English: two parties of five or six persons, evidently friends. Opposite to us sat a lady, representative of one party, with a long narrow face tanned by the sun. This only made all the greater the contrast of her faded, ginger-coloured hair, arranged in pale, thin curls. At the head of the table sat a thorough John Bull type of Englishman, with strong red hair, freckles, and a powerful bass voice. The four French people sat at the bottom of the table, and looked supercilious and disdainful. "Ces Anglais" belonged to "perfidie Albion." The father and mother, however, had arrived at years of discretion, and would no doubt have attempted peace overtures had the younger branches not kept up a constant spirit of antagonism.

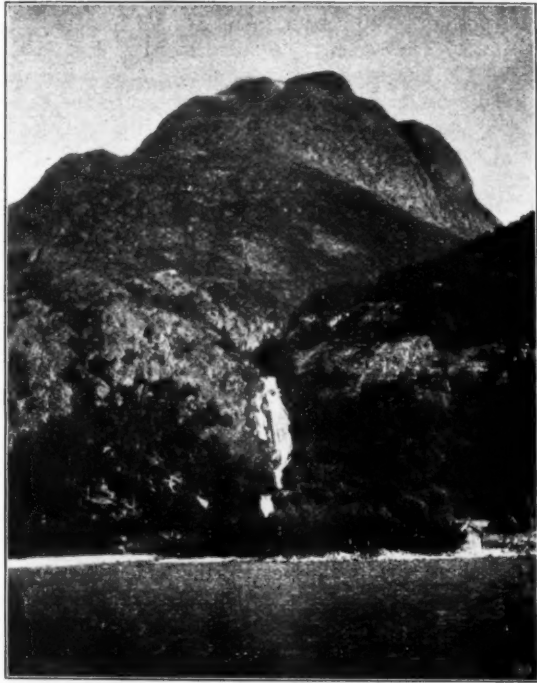
"You are travelling through the country, sirs," said the faded lady. On either side of her was a child the very counterpart of its mother; the two might have been twins. "It is a fine country for cultivating a great appetite."

"Madam, your words are words of wisdom," said L., before I had time to reply, noting the lady's accent, in which there was more than a suspicion of Irish. "But the unfortunate part of it is that we too often sit down to a Barmecide feast, from which we get up hungry and tantalised. The moral effect is also bad; a hungry man has no temper, if I may vary the saying."

"I never heard of Barmecide or the feasts he gave, and am not aware that he ever visited these parts," returned the faded lady; "but all I can say, sir, is that if people starve in going through Norway, it is their own fault. I find my appetite splendid, and take good care never to get up hungry."

It was indeed capacious, and evidently all was fish that came to her net.

"I fear it is too often a case of quantity *versus* quality," said L.



THE STRYNSVAND.

"That does not suit me. I like both; but if I can only have one, give me quality."

"O sir, you must not be too particular," returned the faded lady. "That is a bad state of things on which to begin a tour of the world. You would starve before you got to the end of it."

As she spoke, she helped herself largely to a nauseous-looking mess that was being passed round on a large dish. She piled up her plate with what seemed nothing but fat and boiled saddle-flap, and liberally helped her two children.

"Why don't you take some, sir?" she said, looking at L. "Your tall frame cannot live upon air. This is very wholesome stuff; quite a Norwegian dish; a mixture of tripe and——"

L. shuddered.

"Spare me a further description, ma'am," he interrupted. "It is evident that there are different kinds of vessels, from silver to clay. The wind is tempered to the lamb."

"I don't know," returned the faded lady, fortunately only mystified; "in Norway I have seen very few vessels of silver or clay either—they are all either pottery or porcelain. And as for lambs, well, it's not the season for them. They come here in spring, just as they do in England or Ireland. I fear, sir, you must have been pampered in your childhood, and not made to eat what was set before you. Now I believe in the Spartan system, and think my girls here do me credit. Veronica and Euphemia, if I gave you nothing but fat for dinner, what should you do?"

"Eat it," replied Veronica and Euphemia in loud quick tones, but with eyes round with horror.

"Of course you would," replied this admirable Spartan mother. "And if I told you to chop off a hand or walk into the fire or jump into a water-butt, you would do it."

It was evident that nothing but the strongest and sternest self-control prevented the girls from setting up a dismal howl at this terrible possibility of martyrdom. They looked furtively at each other behind their mother's back, made horrible grimaces, then turned to and devoured their nauseous Benjamin's portions. Every mouthful was bolted, evidently with difficulty—but it disappeared.

"Bread!" cried the Spartan mother, when the plates were empty. And the poor little creatures, whom we devoutly pitied, were made, French fashion, to mop their plates with their bread and swallow it. The mother looked proudly at L. across the table.

"There, sir," she said; "you see what training and severe discipline will do. By-and-by, when the young men have grown too delicate and fastidious for anything but crochet work and an easy-chair, these girls will be ready to join an amazon corps of volunteers and fight their country's battles."

"If you want quality of food, sir," said the gentleman at the head of the table, speaking for the first time, "you should have gone to Sivertsen's. I believe he prides himself upon what he calls his cuisine. But the place is too slow and quiet for my friend Mrs. O'Flail and myself. We like sound and movement. Noise and racket is to every-day life what salt is to porridge—a good seasoner."

"Every man to his taste," returned L. "Hay and thistles, apples and onions—the earth provides them all. Fortunately tastes are equally diversified."

"And recreations," said the faded lady. "Now my friend Mr. McGrudery," pointing to the gentleman at the head of the table, "has

all his heart and soul in fishing. When he is not eating, drinking, and sleeping, he is fishing. Sometimes fly-fishing, sometimes float-fishing. The latter seems to me rather childish; to sit all day watching a cork bob up and down, fancy at last you have taken a prize, pull up with a great excitement, and find you have caught—nothing. My own idea of an afternoon's amusement is to recline in a boat, get some one to row me about, and let my hands paddle through the water."

"That is to say, ma'am, that like a boa-constrictor after a heavy meal, you like to give way to drowsiness and lie *perdu* until digestion is accomplished."

"Eh?"

The faded lady looked dubious, paused, hesitated, ruminated. She began to suspect that under L.'s mild, polite and gentlemanly tone there was a hidden meaning she could not quite fathom, and like a snail at the approach of danger, she drew in her horns and entered her shell.

Then we looked more keenly at her and found she was not at all faded; the impression entirely arose from the colour of her hair, a pale, washed-out ginger, bleached and dried and crackly, as it almost seemed, by the action of sun and wind. Her face was something between brickdust and cochineal in complexion; and when we noticed the thin compressed lips and square chin, the Spartan element in her composition was accounted for. Poor children! Poor Veronica and Euphemia! But I have known yet harder cases than theirs, where the mother seemed lost to all natural affection; where what should have been motherly love appeared turned to gall and bitterness and hatred, the children sent amidst strangers and never permitted to see home; growing up year after year unloving and unloved.

The faded lady at least kept her little martyrs beside her, and no doubt in her way thought she was doing her duty by them. It is said that an unhappy childhood is often succeeded by a happy later life. There are compensations.

But there was no immediate compensation for our empty feast, and we rose up from table feeling properly aggrieved.

We went out of doors for a stroll, where all was beauty, fresh air and sunshine, and once away from the inn, absolute peace and repose. The boat-houses on the white sands were left to solitude. We had the whole place to ourselves—sands, far-reaching water, and hills. At the landing-stage the boat was still getting up steam, and only there was life or movement to be found—with one exception.

A little distance beyond it, on the balcony at Gloppe's, overhanging the lake, the faded lady and her little martyrs were taking black coffee, assisted by Mr. McGruddery. It seemed that, if Spartan in her discipline, she did not deny them small sweets and luxuries. After all, there are redeeming features in people as well as compensations in the circumstances of life.

"But if their food is a specimen of their coffee," laughed L., "we

will wait for another day to be poisoned. That was the worst Norwegian dinner we have yet sat down to. Let us stroll up to Sivertsen's; we have just time for it."

So circling up the water and passing into a quiet green lane suggestive of honeysuckle and dog-roses, we found ourselves in front of the third inn kept by a Sivertsen we had met in our travels. It looked quite equal to the other two. Open to the broad waters of the Gloppefjord, in the neighbourhood of waving trees, a large green lawn before it, in the centre of which stood the inevitable flagstaff, as necessary to a Norwegian inn as the English pole to the barber of ancient times, Sivertsen's looked the essence of quiet repose.

"This is the place to come to," said L.; "and we must make a note of that when we next visit Sandene."

Then Sivertsen himself appeared at the head of the flight of steps, and we were about to go up and inspect the premises when the steamer gave a frantic whistle. There was no withstanding the summons, and we quickly turned, retraced our steps, and found ourselves settled on the little bridge. Luggage was being scrambled on board, ours amidst the rest, and when we offered the hotel porter a fee for his trouble—he was not responsible for the bad fare provided—it was civilly refused.

"I am not allowed," he said, and whether against the rules of the inn or the steamer did not transpire. But I longed to reward the man for his honesty, or at least to tell him how much better he was than many of his species.

At last we were off, and Mrs. O'Flail actually waved her handkerchief from the balcony, where three empty cups stood in front of her like vanquished battalions; but whether the delicate attention was meant for L., the captain, or things in general, it was impossible to divine.

"She is shaking the dust off her handkerchief against me," laughed L. "Having puzzled her brains all this time, she has just, under the stimulating influence of black coffee, arrived at the conclusion that there was something a little hidden and uncomplimentary in my remarks, and is accordingly furious. I only fear she may vent her spleen upon the little martyrs. Poor little creatures, with their sunless childhood! And yet perhaps she makes it up to them in some way or other—or they make it up to themselves: abuse her just as they pulled faces—behind her back."

We were now launched on the waters of the Gloppe, as this branch of the fjord is called, surrounded by all its beauty of scenery. Only the human element was not beautiful; only the human element jarred. We had one side of the square bridge to ourselves; on the other the French Communists, as L. called them, were located together with two Englishmen who greeted them as travelling acquaintances.

The dissipated-looking daughter spoke excellent English. And when you came to look carefully at her it was not so much dissipation as untidiness that characterised her—that French untidiness which is the

worst of all, coupled with a *laissez-aller* attitude and expression; for a Frenchwoman who does not make the most of dress and personal appearance must have something very wrong in her constitution. Of all bad forms it is the worst.

She, however, possessed one thoroughly French talent, for she never ceased to chatter. The Englishmen had evidently parted from her about a week ago, and there were endless notes to exchange on what they had seen, heard and done.

"You Englishmen," she observed in the course of her endless stream of conversation, "you are *barbares*. You think of nothing but fishing, all day long, and all night too, if it did not grow dark.



THE OTTA.

Wherever we go, it is always much fishermen, few rooms. We wanted to stop to-day at Faleide—we shall come to it presently. We telegraphed. No rooms—all occupied by fishermen. We are much more rational in France. It is true we don't fish, we don't shoot, we don't ride, we don't play cricket, or fatigue ourselves with football; half the time we do nothing—but how gracefully we do it!"

Sandene had faded away. Towards the west the mountains rose some 5000 feet high, very fine in form. The whole neighbourhood abounds in wild glens, innumerable excursions, magnificent glaciers, some of which are visible as one makes way through the fjords.

Presently the scenery lost its smiling character; trees and sloping hillsides disappeared; we entered narrower waters. High walls of

perpendicular rock, grey, gloomy and savage, confronted us. No outlet was visible, and we seemed charging these mighty bulwarks, until, when close upon them, a narrow channel disclosed itself; straits through which the steamer glided in safety.

"The Gate of Tears," said L. "One can imagine many a shipwreck here, and in the darkness it would be risky. Fancy crashing into these rocky walls!"

It was almost a sublime moment, this passing through the Gate of Tears; the contrast between the little cockleshell with its precious human freight and the stupendous rocks between which we steered a straight course. Then came a long narrow channel of more rocky walls, smooth and perpendicular, where the waters looked dark and cold and cruel, waiting some false move to engulf us in untold fathoms. But the helm was in good hands, and the throb and plash of the steamer echoed and re-echoed in the surrounding cliffs as she went her way.

Again the scene changed. We passed out of all this frowning grandeur, so infinitely fine, on entering the *Utfjord*, where nature was once more smiling and vernal. All about here, indeed, a series of fjords branch off from the great *Nordfjord*, which with all its lovely ramifications runs out of the great Atlantic; runs far up in the land with those wonderful results found only in Norway.

In the *Utfjord*, the hillsides are sloping and wooded; many farms are seen with their cultivated patches and green fields, the house itself often picturesquely surrounded by dark fir-trees. No doubt in the gloaming they often whisper mysteriously to the inmates of these quiet homesteads; tell of the peace and repose of these remote hills and valleys; of restless movement and ceaseless care, heritage of a world so far off that to them it is a mere name without sense or meaning.

Here and there amidst the mountains, one caught sight of a glacier, and in all this neighbourhood are many glacier excursions, some of them sufficiently important for guides and ropes.

We called at several places; one of them—*Rand*—especially desolate and out of the world. A solitary house, all gables and verandahs, built of wood, as they nearly all are, giving to these houses so light and cheerful an aspect in comparison with the heavy brick and stone structures met with elsewhere.

It was partly a sanatorium, but the season was over and the place deserted. No one landed, no one came on board. One or two forlorn waiters sauntered from the hotel to the pier, as though time hung heavily on their hands, gazed longingly after the retreating steamer, and no doubt counted the hours to the day when it would bear them also away.

So we went on through the long afternoon, passing from one lake-like fjord into another.

Verlo's straggling village and church were reflected in the water as we approached; reminding us of Egge and the lady-like house-keeper, the *cordons bleus* in petticoats and mob cap, and the tomb-like Vaatedal; for the road we did not take from Egge ends at Verlo. We had only left it that morning; but one sees so much and travels so far in a day in Norway that every day, like Dr. Johnson's miles in Skye, seems as two.

Then came Indviken, with its solitary church, but no inn for man's accommodation. It lies at the mouth of the savage Præste Valley, through which you may in time reach the summit of the Ceciliekrona, towering some 5000 feet above the lake. There are glacier valleys round about, especially those of Loen, Olden, and Stryn. To the latter we were hastening, but by another route. Each valley has its lake, surrounded by precipitous walls 5000 feet high, above which sharp-pointed peaks tower another 1500 feet. All these are surrounded by glaciers. Here will be found trout and salmon fishing, making the region popular and crowded; and every year the results diminish.

Beyond this came Faleide, at the finest part of the fjord, where the mountains, looking eastward, are magnificent, and whence excursions may be made to the wonderful Jostedals-bræ: that immense glacier-field that like the octopus throws out many branches, and in extent seems unlimited.

It was here the French Communists had desired to land, and finding no room decided to go on for a time to Visnaes. Mademoiselle, on approaching the interesting-looking place, was loud in condemning "*Ces pêcheurs: pecheurs*," she declared, guilty of a *jeu-d-mot* "in every sense of the word."

The only person to land was an architect, with a whole portfolio of plans, and Mademoiselle viciously declared his mission was to build more houses for more fishermen. The race of fishermen would by-and-by overrun the world.

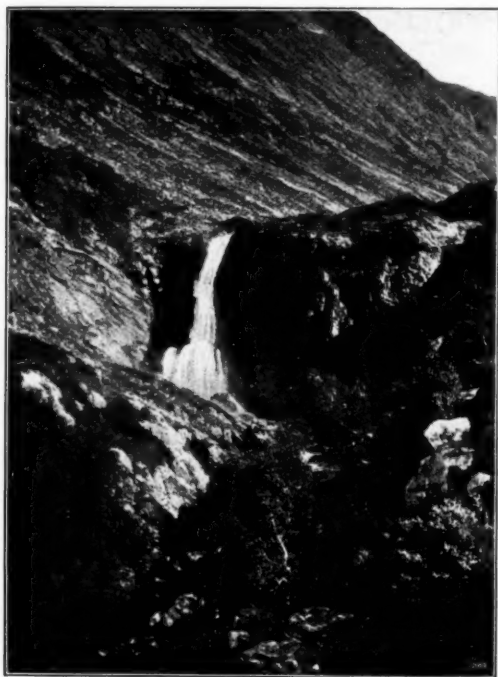
Faleide's situation easily explains its popularity, and mademoiselle overstated the case in saying that it was only patronised by the disciples of Izaak Walton.

Tenden's hotel would tell a different tale. The enterprising landlord has extended his resources. Beginning life with a small inn, this he gradually enlarged; then built himself a second and a third. All three houses flourish—all are full during the season; but the greater number of his people are not there for fishing purposes. It is one of the best centres for excursions; and many days may pass, and no two days' experiences prove alike.

Some are mountain climbing, some glacier exploring; others making acquaintance with the valleys, where nature is found in all her moods; from the savage and sublime heights to soft and smiling slopes, nooks and crevices gemmed with ferns and wild flowers, where perpetual summer seems to reign. But visit them in the heart of

winter—a snow-bound Norwegian winter—and you will find it as difficult to imagine this frigid zone can ever yield to summer and sunshine—ever unbend and break up, and once more become gay and fertile; the petrified voices of a thousand frozen waterfalls ever again burst forth into singing, return to life and motion, and go on their way rejoicing.

In winter the hotels are empty and closed, their owner reposing



THE VIDEDAL.

after the labours of summer—that race for wealth so many are running, and so often come in just at the death.

Or if a few people come to him in the short days, their object is not fishing or any mild excursion. They are there to shoot big game. Not the big game of India—tigers, lions, elephants—but the lesser big game of the north; small Norwegian bears that are not very formidable and not very hard to shoot, though a hug from Bruno might all the same prove a token of affection more demonstrative than desirable.

They are intelligent creatures these bears; their expression full of sense and understanding; their grin something approaching the human; so that to shoot a bear seems next door to murder. Their devotion to their young, their skill in defending them against danger, may well excite admiration and surprise.

"I have shot bears in India," said to me one day one who had hunted big game in that gorgeous land, pointing to a huge bear-skin adorning a vestibule, trophy of his own skill, "but I will never shoot another. They are *too human*."

But there is no bear-hunting in summer in the hills and valleys of Faleide. People flock there with more humane tendencies; though ill-balanced minds might be inclined to inquire the difference in degrees of cruelty between shooting a bear and landing a trout.

Faleide looks especially bright and sunny. The wooded slopes in the neighbourhood suggest endless forest walks, where birds sing and squirrels play at hide-and-seek, the sun glints through whispering pines, and ferns and wild flowers grow in such profusion that you walk in fairyland, the rich flaming fungi absolutely dazzling you. At every turn you expect to see Puck and Oberon in this enchanted country; Oberon with his horn, mischievous Puck with his wild laughter. But though an enchanting forest, there is no enchantment, at any rate at midday. Perhaps a Midsummer's Dream would come at midnight, with Oberon and Puck and Titania and all their court. Certainly they might seek the wide world over and not find a fairer spot for their revels.

Then unexpectedly you come to an inland lake, high up, full of fish, where the waters are deep and dark, and a fringe of fir trees, it may be, is reflected upon a surface smooth and silent, excepting where a trout suddenly leaps two feet in the air and falls back with a startled splash into his native element. The utter silence of these mountain lakes is very suggestive of mystery.

The mountains about Faleide, I have said, are splendid; finest of all, perhaps, the magnificent Aarheimsfjeld, with its castellated outlines cleaving the sky. It is over 2000 feet high, and lies above the wonderful Strynsdal, through which we should journey on the morrow. The excursions are endless, each seeming more impressive than the last.

Our fjord journey was now approaching an end. The shades of evening were beginning to fall and the sun had gone down behind the mountains. There was a slight chilliness in the air. Mademoiselle sent her unpresentable brother for a shawl, carelessly threw it over her shoulders, and drew it about her. Her powers of chatter, however, were in no way frozen; nothing short of the North Pole would have performed that miracle. At length, rounding the Hestöra, and passing into a narrowing channel, we reached Visnaes, where we were to leave the steamer.

It was a very lovely spot. On the banks, almost overhanging the

waters, was an hotel of considerable size, kept by Peter Tenden, probably the enterprising proprietor of Faleide. It was the gloaming hour, and the hotel was lighted up. Also lighted up, and looking quite formidable, was a large steamer at anchor in the smooth waters. This, we discovered, was the *Victoria*, one of those so-called yachts that take personally-conducted parties round Norway. She had landed all her passengers, who were enjoying a special banquet at the hotel.

There was a murmur of alarm on board our small boat. The French Communists and the rest of the passengers were to put up here for the night. The commissariat department of the hotel would be as a field of barley ravaged by an army of locusts. Mademoiselle was in despair.

"*Nous aurons pour souper un petit rien entre deux plats!*" she exclaimed to her brother. And then turning to the Englishmen who had paid her so much devotion during the journey, and proved such good listeners:

"This is worse than fishermen," she said. "They at least add to the larder when they have any success, which does not seem to me too often; but these crowds and caravanserais, who travel in legions, create a temporary famine in the land wherever they go. What shall we do? I am quite exhausted with hunger."

Had she declared herself exhausted with conversation, it would not have been surprising; but it may be that shallow streams run on for ever without effort and without fatigue.

We were not remaining at Visnaes for the night, and therefore were indifferent to the hundred passengers faring sumptuously at the hotel. For us there was yet another stage to perform. If yesterday's journey had been shorter than usual, to-day's more than made up for it.

On landing, a little deformed man, quite above the ordinary skydsgut, came up and offered his services. We had no alternative but to accept them; there was only one man and one vehicle on the scene of action—a stolkjaer. We represented to him that we wished for carriages, and he declared—we thought truthfully for once—they were not to be had. As it was growing late we did not press the matter, but accepted what was provided.

The stolkjaer, like the man, was of a superior description. Whilst the French Communists and the rest of the passengers were disembarking and looking after their luggage, preparatory to joining the gallant hundred and voracious excursionists from the *Victoria*, we were already well on our road.

A magnificent drive, made more impressive by the gloaming hour, the scenery exceptionally fine, the new road good. Mountains, wild and lofty, stood out boldly against the deepening sky. Beside us ran the Stryns-Elv, a river of great beauty, well stocked with fish. Here and there we passed a solitary farm. Nothing, indeed, could exceed the loneliness of the valley, and from beginning to end we saw no living creature.

Our skydsgut, I have said, was much deformed, but his face was pleasing, and he spoke good English. As usual, he was anxious to find out all about us ; whether we were English or of some other nation ; where we had come from and whither bound ; especially anxious to know what we thought of Norway, and whether we would recommend it to our friends, so that every year more and more people might come to his land of the midnight sun.

There was a certain refinement of manner, expression, and language about him, sometimes seen in the deformed, and born of sensitiveness.

Perhaps he was a little too inquisitive, and he talked very freely ; but we were quite willing he should do so, for by this means you may gain considerable insight into the ways of a country, and the nature of its people. Johan spoke in that clear thin voice, also peculiar to the deformed.

"Why are you so anxious that more and more people should come to Norway ?" asked L. "A useless question," he added in an aside, "but it gives him a topic to enlarge upon."

"Because we are poor and want to grow rich," promptly replied Johan. "Rich, as you understand riches, I suppose we shall never be ; but hitherto there has been what you call so much grinding poverty in Norway, and that is what we want altered. Moderate ease of life would to us represent wealth."

"You appear to have that already," I observed. "There is a great difference in the financial condition of Norway between now and twenty years ago. Everything is much more flourishing ; there is more evidence of ease if not of wealth. Money has gone down in value. The hotels charge out of all proportion to what they give. The character of the Norwegian, once so open and generous, is becoming more like the rest of the world. When I first visited Norway a skydsgut thought himself well paid with 25 öre, and did not expect or ask more. Now he is not satisfied unless he receives a kroner."

"But he doesn't always get it," returned the skydsgut in melancholy tones. "And all you say is the inevitable effects of time. People think they will be generous. Twenty-five öre, they say, is nothing ; we will give fifty. The Americans began it. They are a bad nation that way, and give too much or too little. It is want of judgment. One moment they treat you as their best companion ; next, as their slave or dog."

"Extremes again," laughed L.

"Unpleasant extremes," cried poor Johan. "Give me a true English gentleman, who always treats you with friendly respect, and does not change like the wind every five minutes, shifting about like a weathercock."

"And yet you seem indebted to the Americans for some of your English," said L., for Johan spoke with an American accent, though less offending than the fair Hebe's at Egge.

"Because I learned it over there," he replied. "I went over when I

was a lad of fourteen to some relations. They were well-to-do, and I stayed with them five years. Probably I should be with them now, but my father wrote word that he was getting old and wanted me. I packed up at once. Six weeks after receiving that letter I was at home again."

"That was good of you. Is your father yet alive?"

"Oh yes. He lives not very far from here, and is not what you call a poor man—for a Norwegian. The farm is his own property, and he makes a good living out of it. I help him. One day it will be mine."



HEAD OF THE VIDEDAL.

"But if you help with the farm, how can you do skydsgut work?"

"Oh,"—Johan generally began his sentences with the exclamation—"I come down here for the season, when I can very well be spared from home, and make quite a big sum for pocket-money. By that means I don't have to come upon my father for anything."

"If you work for your father you are entitled to wages," said L. "The labourer is worthy of his hire."

"It will all be mine some day," returned Johan simply. "There will be the more for me if I draw nothing now."

Indirect testimony to a trait the Norwegians possess strongly—that of thrift, almost to the point of hoarding. They have never been accustomed to spending money, never had it to spend; and they part with

it as reluctantly as they part with their life-blood. Time will correct this, and substitute greater evils.

"Well, we were talking about the skydsgut and his fee," said Johan. "The 25 öre having given place to 50, that goes on for some time; went on for some years; goes on even now; but in many instances a whole kroner is given. If the skydsgut is a grown-up man—I am twenty-eight," he added as a delicate hint—"it is not too much. Everything is dearer in Norway than it used to be. The value of money has truly gone down."

"Is this your own stolkjaer?" asked L.



THE VIDEDAL.

"Oh no; it belongs to the station. All I receive is my skydsgut tee, and sometimes it is 50 öre and sometimes 100."

"Never 25 öre?" laughed L.

"The days of 25 öre have passed for ever," replied Johan, lowering his eyes and folding his hands devoutly.¹

We were driving leisurely by the river side, not specially anxious to reach our destination. The evening was too glorious, the way too beautiful, to wish to part from either. In the darkening sky the stars were beginning to come out like points of silver, though

¹ Nevertheless, in spite of Johan's remarks, Mr. Bennett does not advocate any great extension of the skydsgut's fee, and in the case of young boys it is unnecessary and possibly unwise.

light still lingered. Such as there was found its reflection upon the surface of the flowing water. A deep silent stream, with stretches of green pastures on the opposite side, bounded by the everlasting hills. To our left, beyond a rugged stretch of ground giving breadth to the valley, the mountains rose grey and exaggerated in the twilight, with long undulating outlines. We passed a church on the right, on the left a waterfall; and at one point a giant's caldron, of which there are so many in Norway, formed by the action of the stones whirling round and round in the eddies, until an enormous hole is made. The eddies have long since disappeared, the caldrons remain, for they are only found where the river has dried up in the course of long ages.

Ahead of us was the imposing Flofjeld, with the Rindalshorn pointing skywards, reminding one of the curious and more famous Romsdalshorn; and near it the Braekkfjeld with its enormous snowfield. A slight breeze blew down the valley, soft yet invigorating.

The calm evening, so full of silence and repose, was all the more felt and appreciated, perhaps, for having left all our fellow-passengers at Visnaes. None had followed; not one was coming our way, as we discovered. All were re-embarking the next day, the French Communists possibly to find accommodation at Faleide.

Passing a large house on our right, Johan informed us that it belonged to some English fishermen owning the exclusive right to the river. They were to be envied. Here, indeed, they found themselves far from the madding crowd—truly a paradise of fishermen, as our gentle hostess at Förde would have said. Though looking lonely to-night—no other house was within sight—it was by no means desolate. Lights gleamed from the uncurtained windows; and in one room we observed the flash and flicker of a wood-fire.

“The cricket chirrups on the hearth,
The crackling faggot flies!”

quoted L. “It seems quite homelike and comfortable. I wish they would come out, ask us in and put us up for the night. No doubt they would if they knew we were passing and what they were losing; but that sort of hospitality has died out; thanks to the guide-books and Mutual-Improvement-Co-operative-Travelling-Societies, and personally-conducted millions. Johan, does ever a day pass without your acting skydsgut to some one?”

“Never,” answered Johan decisively. “Rain or fine, I am sure to find one passenger at least bound for Mindre Sunde. And yet this is out of the beaten track. People come here, but not in flocks. If they crowd to Visnaes they stop there, and go on the next day by boat. You will not see many English between here and Bergen, except two or three who are staying at Mindre Sunde for fishing.”

The stars were coming out more brilliantly as we passed on to the

long bridge, crossed the Stryns-Elv, and turning sharply to the left under shadow of trees, at last felt that our long day's journey was over.

Now really dark, at the first moment it was impossible to distinguish anything but a few lights gleaming as it were from out the trees. A flight of steps ending in a dark passage suggested a habitation, but of what description was left to the imagination. No one evidently was expected at this time of night. Johan our skydsgut made noise enough, in his thin penetrating voice, to waken the dead.

"Why is no one here?" he cried. "Have you all gone to bed at this hour of the night? Are you all dead? or sleeping?"

At the sound of wheels, however, a porter soon appeared upon the scene, lighted a candle, and rushed down the steps before Johan had time to bring his remonstrance to an end.

To arrive at any strange place in the dark produces at first an unfavourable impression. All is uncertainty and mystery; it may be a paradise or it may be an inferno. And when darkness extends within, you feel it just possible that you are entering a den of thieves and murderers. All the horrible tales of lonely inns, absorbed from childhood upwards, rise up in the memory. Then presentiment steps in, and you look upon this as a warning, but never take it. Human nature never does take warnings and presentiments. Reason rebels, although the warning may come from a world where the end is seen from the beginning.

But to-night I don't think we had any presentiments, in spite of the darkness of the house and the mysterious trees about it. Johan was a guarantee for honesty of purpose, and Norway itself is not a land of evil-doers.

So we followed the porter, and by the light of the solitary candle settled our differences with Johan, who dropped some of his small money and had to hunt for it in the semi-darkness. He seemed in no hurry to return, but an hour after we found him whiling away the moments with the porter, apparently deep in a political discussion.

We fared not sumptuously that night at Mindre Sunde, but it was luxury compared with our midday feast at Sandene.

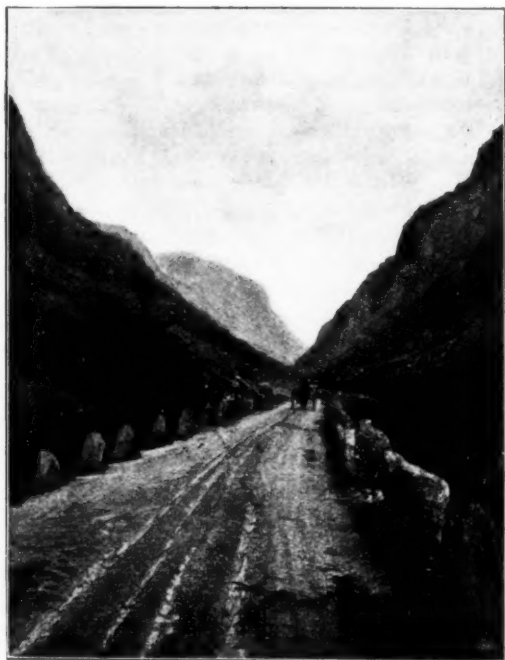
"At least we shall not go to bed on a vacuum," said L.; "and for the rest, run no risk of nightmare."

Later, we went out and stood on the long bridge: a weird, lonely scene. Beneath us flowed the river, dark, silent and mysterious. Sufficient light still lingered to trace the outlines of the mountains stretching far down the valley, black, impenetrable masses. An owl flew out of the trees with noiseless wing, passed over our heads, and seemed to lose itself in the distant hills, where we heard it hooting, a strange, melancholy sound in the intense silence, the wide waste of solitude.

Two hundred yards away a feeble glimmer of light came from the house, glinting through the trees. We walked down the valley the

way we had come, and again the silence and solitude were almost appalling. No wonder if Johan, rather than brave it alone, preferred to put up at Mindre Sunde, and depart at break of dawn. He was not one to battle with the powers of darkness, human or otherwise.

The next morning everything had changed. The sun shone brilliantly, there was not a cloud in the sky. If we had thought the scene fine last night, it was immeasurably more splendid now. In front of us was the beautiful Strynsvand, largest of the three Alpine



NEAR GROTLID.

lakes of the districts; the surrounding mountains varied with snow-fields and glaciers, the slopes picturesque and diversified, and the banks bordered with the drooping birch.

Our little steamer, the *Frithjof Nansen*, was to leave at eight o'clock, and punctually at 6.30 the attentive porter awoke us to a new day. He was by far the best feature about the inn, and we placed him next to our admirable hall-porter at Vik. But we had no three Graces here to remind us of our pleasant sojourn in those charming waters; in place of them, at the last moment, three very

unromantic Germans came rushing from Visnaes, post-haste, only just in time to catch the boat. But for this we should have had the little steamer and the lake to ourselves. They proved, however, rather an exception to the ordinary German, and were not aggressive.

The lake, about ten miles long, is full of interest. Narrow at Mindre Sunde, it presently widens into full splendour. In front of us the Flosfjeld rises some 4500 feet, the sharp Rindalshorn rising another 1500 feet behind it. The farms and glaciers of Fosnaes and Dispen are conspicuous, and on the left the graceful waterfall opens out. We called at one or two places where it is possible to land and make fine mountain and glacier excursions.

At the farther end of the lake a frowning, perpendicular wall of granite confronted us, and we seemed hurrying to destruction (just as we had charged the rocks in the Gleppenfjord); until the little steamer turned sharply to the left, passed through a passage just wide enough to admit it, and in a hidden nook, looking like the ends of the earth, Hjelle stood revealed.

We were sorry to leave the sunny lake with its imposing surroundings. Our attentive porter had telephoned our arrival, and carriages awaited us: a great boon in Norway, and a great advantage.

Hjelle seemed a small place of marvellous wildness and desolation. Perched on the steep mountain slope, the blasting of a rock or the convulsion of a great storm might well precipitate it into the lake, to lie there for ever like a buried city. All the same, the little station is built on a rock, and will probably stand for ages to come. Our carriole-man came up to us, hat in hand; a man above the average skydsgut, as we saw at once; owner of the carriages, and of the inn and station about a mile up the road. The three Germans disappeared, and we saw them no more. They were probably going to the snowfields and glaciers of the Saeterfjeld; or perhaps taking the short road to the gaard of Vidal, neighbourhood of innumerable and accessible glaciers. It was pleasant to feel that once more we had the district to ourselves.

Now commenced a drive unequalled, the valley narrow and wild, but of the utmost beauty. Arrived at a certain point, where some fifty yards up the slope stood the inn, our conductor informed us he could go no farther, and left us to the tender mercies of the boy who had accompanied him, assuring us that we were in good hands. So we went on our way rejoicing.

It was a continual ascent, and our progress was correspondingly slow. This mattered little where the scenery was so charming; a valley wonderfully lonely and desolate, rocky mountains, rugged and wild, rising up on either side; a wild tangle of brushwood presently giving place to a more barren wilderness. Then we began the interminable series of zigzags leading out of the world to the vast snow-fields.

On reaching Skaare, we found we had to change horses—a strangely

out-of-the-world station, to-day given up to boys; no responsible person in command. They seemed much perplexed at our arrival, and declared there were no horses to be had; a descending party had taken the last; we must stay for some hours where we were. This we declared we would not do, and at last—after evidently measuring L.'s six feet two—they gave in, changed the horses, and away we went with a fresh skydsgut.

The zigzags seemed interminable, but the splendour of the scene was matchless. Minutes and hours flew by, and still we ascended. We were now in the Videdal, a continuation of the Hjelledal. Above us the Videdal River broke and descended in a series of waterfalls, lending all their life and beauty and music to the view. Arrived at a great height, and looking back, the whole valley lay stretched before us in all its extraordinary magnificence.

On one side, the Hjelledal, looking from this distance green and smiling, stretching far away to the Opstryn Lake; on the other side, still above us, the vast fields of perpetual snow. Many a time we had to pause and rest the horses, but they took zigzag after zigzag bravely. We also constantly paused on our own account. Amidst all this wonderful beauty of nature it was impossible to hurry. The eye could not be satisfied with seeing. Wild flowers and ferns that only grow in certain altitudes tempted us to stop and examine them. Every fresh zigzag seemed to vary the view and show up some new feature.

And at last when the zigzags all lay behind us, we found ourselves in a vast snowfield; snow on the great plateau, snow on the rising hills, snow to right and left of us; eternal snow. In the brilliant sunshine, under the deep-blue skies, it glistened and sparkled like an immense field of diamonds. To our right was a small beautiful lake, in which the reflections of the snow hills and the sky were so extraordinarily vivid it was impossible to divest one of the illusion that we looked upon a new world beneath the waters.

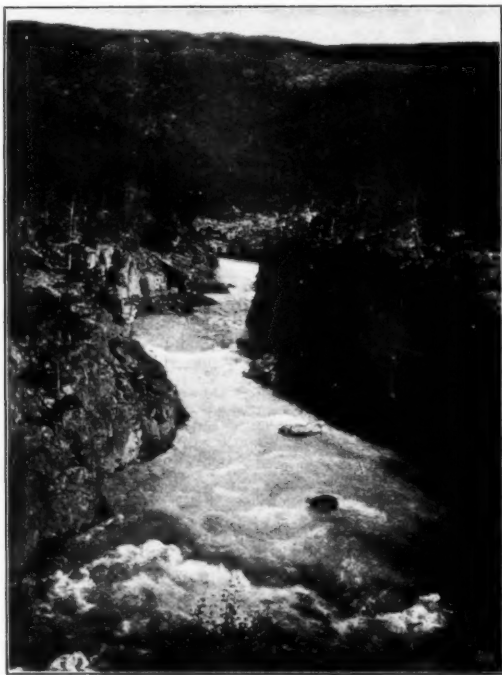
It seemed ages since we had left Skaare. We had breakfasted at eight; it was now three. L. was at great pains to make the skydsgut understand that our bodies after all were only limited-liability machines, and he had reached that limit. Our breakfast had been a very modest one. There was no *cordon bleu* at Mindre Sunde as at Egge, no Hebe to organise, and we had departed on very light fare. L. professed to be exhausted; produced his Norwegian dictionary and phrase-book and rapped out sentences to the skydsgut, who hadn't a word of English to boast of, and seemed generally stupid and short of ideas. To every sentence he had only one reply, "*Strax!*" and we went on and on and still he said "*Strax!*" But the next station would not appear in spite of his repeated protest. L. at last lost patience, and spelt out that if the station did not appear in five minutes, he would make an end of him and present his body to the vultures.

The boy—heavy, loutish, and about eighteen—only wrung his hands, trembled at the knees, and said "*Strax!*"

"If you say *Strax* again I will grind your bones to make my bread," said L., "for I am dying of hunger." And still the unfortunate wretch said "*Strax!*" Whereupon L. broke into laughter.

"After all," he cried, "I don't think I could eat his bones. Better to die of hunger. But this is the most idiotic boy we have had to do with."

Fortunately for both—we were really starving—at that moment



THE OTTA.

a house appeared in the distance: a solitary house in the centre of the snowfield. The skydsgut pointed to it, shouted "*Strax!*" and turned a somersault in the snow in exuberance of joy at feeling his life saved.

"Just in time!" laughed L., shaking his whip at the boy. "Another five minutes and I should have turned cannibal and eaten you up."

And the skydsgut in further ebullition of spirits, turned another wheel in the snow, cried "*Strax!*" and urged on the horses.

A wonderful scene, this extensive snowfield, bounded by the snow

hills; far out of the world and far above the world. In the midst of all the virgin whiteness, with no other colouring than the deep blue sky above, rose the solitary wooden house in which L. hoped to be restored to animation. We, too, urged on the horses, and they answered well in spite of their long journey. Sooner than seemed possible, we had reached the haven where refreshment might be had "for man and beast."

Or at any rate for man. The beasts had brought their own provender, and had starvation continued much longer we should, like Nebuchadnezzar, have had to fall to upon the hay. Skydsgut and horses encamped by the roadside, and commenced their refectations, whilst we went down some fifty yards to the house.

First a small child ran out as we approached, then ran back like a frightened hare. Next a woman appeared; civil, respectable, comely of look and spirit, apparently not in the least depressed by the solitude surrounding her day and night like a pall; silence of the tomb, loneliness of the desert.

We reached the brown wooden hut, which was of fair dimensions, and the woman, greeting us amicably, led the way into a large long room, which seemed to serve her as both living and sleeping chamber. Under the windows were one or two long tables; and opposite these, against the farther wall, two beds, curtained, and as far as possible separated from the room. One might as well have slept in sarcophagi. Everything was perfectly neat and clean. A few chairs were scattered about, but the general impression was that of bareness.

At one end was a wide fireplace, and a small fire of peat was burning, with a few fir-cones thrown in by way of incense. An old coffee-pot stood beside it. All round were many pots and pans, bright and shining; what purpose other than adorning they served it was difficult to imagine. Picturesque they undoubtedly were, and there was an air of rough homeliness about the room that was pleasantly suggestive. The woman was evidently a good housewife.

We asked her if she could give us food. She spoke very little English, and again L. had recourse to his phrase-book. With its help they got on very well.

"I have evidently a gift for tongues," he laughed, "and could almost pass an examination in Norwegian. In the diplomatic service I should be invaluable. What can you give us to eat?" he inquired anxiously of the woman. "We are dying of hunger."

The woman shook her head, as much as to say the resources of her larder were limited—as indeed they were. She placed chairs at the long table under one of the latticed windows, and then crossing the room, dived into the recesses of a huge coffer. From this she brought forth triumphantly a cheese made of goat's milk, so like a bar of soap that L. shuddered. When to this she added bread, butter, and English biscuits, we felt infinitely thankful for these small mercies. Her crowning achievement consisted of bottles of excellent Norwegian beer.

"I have no meat," she said. "I never have any meat. This is not a station. You cannot get horses here. It is only a lonely mountain house, for the use of those who wish to rest or stand in need of light refreshment."

"But don't you die of the solitude, or go mad with it?" asked L. "Surely the human mind cannot stand too much of this sort of thing?"

"I am only here in summer," replied the woman, "and my husband often comes up from Saturday to Monday. When summer is over I go back to Grotlid, where my husband works. I don't mind the loneliness up here—the white snowfields are so beautiful, and my little girl runs about and grows strong and keeps me company."

L. had cut a thin slice of the goat's cheese, and it not only looked but tasted so much like soap, that he made a grimace which admitted of no doubt as to his opinion. The woman seemed disappointed, evidently looking upon the cheese as her *pièce de résistance*. In spite of all, we managed extremely well.

"Hope revives," cried L., when he had finished a large bottle. "A few minutes ago I felt less than the half of the half of myself; I now feel convalescent; and that the proper study of mankind is man."

"Which means by interpretation, that as only woman reigns here, you think it time to go further afield and prosecute our inquiries into human nature? That beer was really equal to our experiences at Vik."

"Where we left the Graces," cried L. "Let us drink to the Graces!" raising and draining his tumbler to the dregs. "They are now no doubt disporting themselves on the Hardanger.

'But come, thou goddess fair and free,
In heaven yclept Euphrosyne!'"

he quoted. "We ought to have given each of them a name. Aglaia and Thalia make up the trio. Only how distinguish one from the other?"

The woman had put the coffee-pot upon the crackling fir-cones, and now came forward with cups, insisting that it was impossible to depart without coffee. If the cheese was indifferent, the coffee was excellent, and as she poured it out a pleasant aroma spread itself through the room.

"A mist
Of incense curl'd about her, and her face
Well-nigh was hidden in the minster gloom,"

again quoted L., who seemed in a strange, poetic humour. And in truth the world around us looked like a huge bridecake, suggesting wedding-bells and marches and legions of fair women.

After our rest and refreshment, our beer and coffee, strange mixture though they formed, we felt invigorated and ready to do battle with giants on our way. We had had a long hour's rest, and the carriages were once more waiting by the roadside.

The woman's charge was so moderate that we blushed for the English plate of buttered biscuits L. had so quickly despatched and, like Oliver, asked for more. We felt constrained as a mere matter of justice to double her fee, and bestow a small silver coin upon the child, who now looked rather more like a tame hare than a wild one. This completely won over the good woman, and she would fain have had us carry off her beloved goat's cheese bodily. We had thoroughly enjoyed our frugal meal in that lonely mountain eyrie, and seldom had felt more remote from mankind.

And so we departed, the woman speeding us with her presence, and still looking after us, her hand shading her eyes from the glare of the sun, when we must have been a mere dark speck upon the white snow; and she, in that weird and solitary spot looked like a sibyl working kindly spells upon mankind. Then we turned and went down between the mountains, and saw her no more. She went back to her loneliness, we went on into the world.

It seemed that we had climbed a long and difficult ascent for the pleasure of climbing down again, for now it was a constant and gradual descending. Presently we passed out of the snow region, the white world disappeared, and with it all suggestion of bridecake and fair women. It was hard to part with it; to leave all this wide field of virgin purity, all the glaciers, including the important Tystigbrae, which stretches far along the valley.

We left the snowfields behind us and returned to warmth, verdure, and vegetation; the region of waterfalls and flowing rivers, passing quickly from the frigid to the torrid zone. Nature seemed to awaken out of sleep; we had just passed through a dream-world of great beauty but of stagnation—a semblance of the ice age gone by, a foretaste of that to come.

As we journeyed, no longer like tortoises, but fairly bowling downhill, we saw Grotlid in the far distance reposing in its solitude, the river Otta running and sparkling beside it through the long valley. Grotlid was simply an inn or station with its barns and outhouses. To the south lay more snowfields in the mountains. On our left we passed a rushing, roaring waterfall, emptying itself into the Otta; in fact it was merely a fall of the river. Down we went, and crossing a bridge, found ourselves in the depths of the valley.

The broad river accompanied the road; and every now and then a trout jumped up to see who was coming, and whether we were friends or foes. As fishing-rods were conspicuous by their absence, he comfortably opened his mouth with a gasp of welcome, frisked his tail, and plashed back into the stream.

A long straight course of road and river, a lovely valley with distant views of mountains and snowfields, a great solitude, this we saw and felt. At length the inn, which in spite of its loneliness had a certain cheerful air about it. A smiling landlady hastened down the steps to meet us; and standing in the doorway, as though they had dropped

from the clouds, we espied our old friend the minister with his little wife, who, her stiff corkscrew curls all standing at right angles from each other, and her little round face like a rosy withered apple, looked more quaint and peculiar than ever. The contrast of her tall, portly, handsome, well-set-up husband, was more striking than when we had first met them at Sande.

The little old lady made us a stiff reverence, in which there was as much dignity as could possibly be put into a wooden doll, whilst the minister with outstretched hand and rich round voice came forward exclaiming : " Well met again and welcome to Grotlid ! "

"FEBRUARY'S DAY"

"So, life can boast its day, like leap-year,
Stolen from death!"

I

IT was her whim, she said.

Mrs. Strangeforth always put a particular desire for her own way—especially when the gratification of that desire was calculated to raise opposition—down to a whim.

The phrase had its conveniences. It suited her style for one thing; it relieved her of responsibility for another; above all, it cloaked much deliberate purpose.

"I wish—" she began; and then she paused, pouting her lips like a spoiled child.

She glanced at the man by her side, as though expecting him to put in a word; but Fred Harding continued to trace patterns moodily on the gravel with the point of his stick.

Esmée's brows contracted, but the next instant she resumed—

"I wish to drive to that walled village in the hills, to the one, I mean, we caught a glimpse of last Thursday. I want something new. I'm tired of the Riviera Palace and of the Observatory. Cimiez bores me to death, and I know Beaulieu and the Reserve off by heart. The thought of a tea-party makes me shudder, and I can't get up a particle of excitement at Monte Carlo—not even when I lose. Go"—turning imperiously to Mr. Harding—"and find out all about a carriage for me. The landlord or somebody will tell you."

He rose slowly, while she seated herself more comfortably in her basket-chair, crossed her feet, opened her sunshade, and looked beyond the crowd of loiterers on the Promenade des Anglais to where the Mediterranean lay shimmering under the brilliant Southern sun.

In a moment or two Fred Harding returned and stood beside her.

"The landlord presumes that the village you mean is St. Laon."

"Does he?" answered Esmée; "as long as it is the walled village I don't mind what it is called."

"He says no one ever does drive there."

"Then I shall be the first."

"He says the road is execrable, and that you will be shaken to death."

"I don't agree with him. I shall survive it."

"You will have to start at least two hours before you usually ring for your coffee."

"Toinette can awake me."

Mr. Harding looked towards the sea a moment; he might have abandoned the argument.

When he turned, the expression on his face was not pleasant. A man cannot do what he was about to do and look his best.

"How," he asked, speaking with considerable deliberation, "about the early morning air for your cough?"

Their glances met; her look held his for a moment. She rose, shut her sunshade, and took up her fan.

"Did you think you were saying something amusing?" she asked contemptuously.

She swept away from him, down the broad path, into the hotel.

With a hard word he pulled his hat over his eyes.

The next morning the carriage stood at the door, and Mrs. Strange-forth came out—alone.

She sent Toinette to her room for a rug, a second time for her cushion, a third time for a scent-bottle.

He was behind the time. She tapped her foot impatiently, and looked up the street. Her lips smiled, but there was apprehension in her eyes. This was not the first occasion on which he had been late. And when a man grows unpunctual in keeping such appointments, what then?

At that moment Fred Harding appeared, and the comedy, which deceived no one, and which was yet a sop to appearances, was played once more.

"You!" she exclaimed, with so excellent an imitation of surprise that it betokened practice.

"Then you are going after all, Mrs. Strange-forth," he answered; but he jerked out the words as an actor sometimes does when he betrays impatience with the lines that he has spoken for so many nights in succession.

She invited him to accompany her, and he stepped into the carriage.

"That is all," she said, and she leaned forward to dismiss her maid.

"*Oui, Madame, parfaitement,*" Toinette replied demurely; but there was an intelligence in the words which was not lost on one of her listeners.

Fred Harding threw himself back upon the cushions of the victoria and stared gloomily ahead.

The position was becoming unendurable.

"Women," he told himself, "he had always been given to understand were endowed with a conscience, but he wondered how much it required to prick it."

For a little Esmeé left him so. She knew there was much in not worrying a man, more in not observing an ill-humour.

She turned her head from side to side, let fall a soft exclamation

just once or twice—not too often—but when the yellow of the mimosa or the fragrance of the heliotrope tempted it; laughed—her laugh was notably musical—when the vagaries of a peasant boy gave her an opportunity, and threw out a few *sous* when the children on the road-side pelted the carriage with faded roses.

It was such artlessness, so whimsical perhaps, certainly so bewitching; only every now and again her eyes narrowed until they became a slit between her lids, and she shot a glance, full of calculation, at the figure by her side.

At length when the sun was up, and as the carriage was rolling along between the fields of roses and jessamine, which, in spite of the beauty of their individual flowers, contrive to be so ugly when reared in straight rows for the perfume manufactory, Esmeé turned to Mr. Harding.

"Are you sorry you came?" she questioned softly.

Fred roused himself to ask her what she had said.

Mrs. Strangeforth examined him deliberately, attentively.

He had not waited for her answer. His gaze was fixed on the hills. His eyes were roving into the space before him, where, it might be, the mountains suggested a more untrammelled existence; his mouth was drawn with a deeper discontent than that of a passing ill-temper. His hands fidgeted with a cigarette which he did not smoke, as though his listlessness was but pent-up energy.

Esmeé saw, and remembrance was ruthless, for it pointed a contrast. She shivered.

The next instant she played the trump-card of a woman in her circumstances, for the question which followed began with "Do you remember?"

She slid into a retrospect. She touched discriminatingly on what had drawn them together. Her tone was soft, her words well chosen; she was tender by inference rather than by expression. She reconstructed pleasant scenes; she endeavoured to surround him with the emotion of the old days; she painted once more the picture of his coming into her life; she tried to take him back to the days when it had all begun with his being "so sorry" for the little child-like woman, married to the morose man who divided his time between his stud and his blue-books, to the days before a well-managed cough and a complaisant medical verdict had sent her to winter in the south; to the days when she kept her place at the head of her husband's house, and he, merely "a friend," had found her so appreciative, so sympathetic, that the pheasants were free from their deadliest shot, and the hunt lost its hardest rider, while he slipped as near to the edge of the precipice in her company as might be without going over into the abyss itself.

But to-day Fred Harding was irresponsive, and when the horses, leaving the smooth highway, began to toil up the steep, stony ascent to St. Laon, Esmeé hailed the diversion, even of a piece of uncommonly bad road, with relief.

At length they came to the embattled tower above the principal entrance to the village. The driver dismounted, and, hat in hand, informed the lady and gentleman that it desolated him to be obliged to say that there was not room for a carriage of this size to pass along the streets.

"We can't drive in, not even into the main street!" cried Mrs. Strangeforth.

The driver, still bare-headed and shrugging his shoulders, with hands outspread, deplored that Madame must be so inconvenienced, but that such was the unfortunate arrangement.

"Never say," Esmeé exclaimed, and she bent towards him for whom all this had been planned, "that I have not found you something new."

A little interest came into Mr. Harding's face. He looked up at the heavy stone walls, which only required their coping to be as they had been in the days when the fierce old Counts of St. Laon harried the surrounding country from their shelter, at the dim arch of the gate, which led to a still more dim street, and he thrust his hands into his pockets and gave himself a little shake.

"This will be an experience," he admitted.

"Something new—quite new," she repeated.

"Old rather—really old," he contradicted, with an animation in his voice that she had not heard for many a day.

"But new to you," she persisted.

"Just so," acquiesced Mr. Harding, peering impatiently into the gloom of the entrance, where a group of children, wondering, curious, timid, had already congregated.

He got out of the carriage, made a step forward, another and another, and then, swinging his head round, as though it were a thing which had to be done, he turned to Mrs. Strangeforth.

"Come," he said.

"You want to explore?" she began, as she joined him, but the next moment, as nature got the better of training, she burst out with, "something new! It's always something new. Anything, everything for that."

"What would you? At the end of this century too," he answered; but before he had finished she had dashed away from him and was standing by the smallest of the children, bending over it with a sweet, gracious air, speaking so alluringly, that even the bare-legged village child, with its tattered skirt and its wondering black eyes, forgot to be frightened, and drew nearer to the marvellous stranger lady.

She took one of the grimy hands in hers, patting it gently.

"Your gloves were white," reminded a cool voice at her elbow.

Esmeé did not as much as turn her head. Nothing betrayed that she had heard.

"Little one," she breathed, bending lower over the child, and if Fred could have credited his ears he would have said that the words ended in a sigh, which nearly approached a sob.

It was a picture. But the man, watching, as he stepped back a pace, and while he acknowledged its effectiveness, merely wondered how long it would be before Mrs. Strangeforth would glance at him to see if he appreciated her pose.

"There!" she exclaimed, when the child pointed towards a weather-beaten building, where one or two windows, hardly wider than slits, were crossed with rough pieces of untrimmed wood; "there!"

Then, dropping into her own tongue, Esmeé turned to Mr. Harding. "This mite," she said, "declares that her home is in that barn. Can you believe it? Such an erection of gloom and darkness with this sky above it. Surely," raising her arm, "not a ray of sunlight, not one, can get through that apology for a window."

Fred moved to her side. He was quite unaffected by her enthusiasm.

"Pick out one child," he said, "and tell her to take us round the village. I'll give her a franc at the end."

"One franc! One child!" Esmeé echoed scornfully; "I'll take them all; I'll give each of them a franc. Some one," recklessly, "shall be happy in St. Laon to-day."

"You will have the whole village after you," he remonstrated.

"And if I have?" she demanded, trying a look on him that had often served her well.

"It will be your whim, of course," he answered.

She winced as though in pain.

II

THEY went round the village, round the circle of the walls, through the narrow, dirty, evil-smelling, cobble-paved streets, Esmeé laughing with the children, enchanting them, saying twenty absurd things to them, asking Fred a dozen foolish questions—questions, nevertheless, which were tintured with that nameless charm of manner that had first attracted him—lifting her white skirts high when they came to a particularly unsavoury bit of pavement, bending under the low arches, and all the while keeping up the pretence of enjoyment, making believe that it was such an excellent holiday.

Mr. Harding followed a step behind, and soon, growing tired of the untrustworthy accounts of the children, attracted a sober, middle-aged woman from her doorstep, who, mingling a thought for the stranger's gold with a good deal of contempt for him who would visit St. Laon when that centre of her universe, Nice, was at his command, set herself to answer as many questions as it pleased him to ask.

The village was just as it had been "always, always," she assured him. It neither grew bigger nor smaller, it just remained the same. People lived and died there, and hardly ever left the circle of its walls. They did go down to Nice—sometimes; but it was evident that the rarity of such a visit made it an event of magnitude in her mind. "They could see Nice from the south wall; they could, quite well,"

she assured Mr. Harding. "She would take him to the place that he might behold it with his own eyes. Yes," she continued, "everything was brought to them as it used to be in the old days, on mules' backs." Clothing, groceries, came at irregular intervals, when it pleased the itinerant vendors to visit them; but meat (proudly) they received with regularity once a week, and flour too.

Water? They had wanted for water over there; and the woman paused, climbed up some broken steps to the head of the wall, and pointed with her lean, brown arm to where, beyond the waving grey-green forest of olive trees, a mass of tumbled masonry betokened a deserted village surmounting a spur of rock.

But in St. Laon there was a well—such a well, fed by a spring that had never, never been known to fail. She would show Monsieur this wonderful sight; and she scrambled down to the ground again and dived into one of the narrow side passages, through which a man of large size could hardly squeeze, leading up to the "Place" of the village.

Mr. Harding followed, and found that the whole life of St. Laon was centred round a square hardly a hundred feet wide. A fountain, with its stonework broken and decayed, and with the steps leading to its basin worn with the tread of centuries of water-seekers, rose in the centre of the "Place"; a church, on a scale—when one saw its size from within—out of all proportion to its surroundings, filled the eastern side of the opening; the "Café de l'Univers," with three fly-marked bottles in a diminutive window, and its six feet of bench extending from the door to the church steps, backed on to the left of the sacred edifice, while opposite stood the bakery, common to the whole village.

"But see," exclaimed the guide, and she made Mr. Harding understand that now she had indeed something to show him.

He left Mrs. Strangeforth sitting on the bench of the inn, surrounded by the village children, while their mothers peeped up the narrow passages or out of the windows; and one woman came to her door above the bakery, and standing on the first of the dilapidated steps which led to the street, held out her solemn, fat baby for admiration, and made the most charming figure in the group with her dark skin, her large eyes, her smooth black hair, her short blue petticoat, and her white-crossed bodice, framed in the brilliant green of a vine which trailed over the rough porch of her dwelling.

Fred Harding barely glanced at her as he passed. He was not in the mood for feminine beauty nowadays. He was better pleased with the important strut, and the increased dignity of his middle-aged guide. She walked across the square to a house which Fred had already remarked as being far more important looking than any other he had seen.

The woman threw open the door with a flourish, and stepped back, that he might have an uninterrupted view.

Fred looked, and uttered an exclamation.

"Yes," came the reply, with a demure air of satisfaction, "truly this was a wonderful house, and of a size enormous. Monsieur might have seen others nearly as big—quite as big?"—and when Mr. Harding began to inquire how it came to be there, the woman went on to explain that it had formerly been the dwelling of the Counts of St. Laon.

At this juncture a second woman appeared on the scene, and Mr. Harding's first guide gave him to understand that she considered her duties at an end.

Fred put a coin or two into her hand and hurried into the house.

There but the wrecks of a former grandeur remained; but they were all the more startling in contrast to the present squalor. The great staircase of marble, that had once been spotlessly white, was chipped and stained, the heavy balusters had lost most of their ornamentation, the arms of the fierce old counts were defaced again and again—the work of some turbulent *sans-culotte*, no doubt, for the last count of the race was "married" to the Rhone at Marseille during the ruthless days of the Revolution. The raging griffin that rose defiant at the foot of the steps had lost its head, its counterpart over the high, carved mantel, in what must have been the banqueting-hall, had fared even worse; and in the hall itself onions, straw, wood, potatoes, and rubbish of every description were stored where knights had once supped, and where fair ladies—since the ways of women are ever the same—had doubtless admired them for their brave show, and had smiled on them often, it may be, to their undoing.

Mr. Harding stood with his hands in his pockets, and slowly gazed around. He was not an emotional man, but, at the moment, he felt that he would have given much for the virility of the old counts. If they fought, they fought hard; if they went to the devil, they strode there, they did not merely drift that way. If——

"Oh!" cried a voice at his elbow, "the sunshine and the view! But what are you doing? Thinking of the old counts? Probably you would not have enjoyed a near acquaintance with them. Come into the sunshine. You know"—and a hand was laid on Fred's arm—"the sun shone on them too."

He gave a start; and she, quick at reading his face, removed her fingers, and stood before him.

A single beam of light from one of the loopholes with which the wall facing the country was pierced shot across the floor, and Mrs. Strangeforth stood where its glow fell upon her. Slowly she raised her head, and the slanting ray lent its glory to brighten the gold of her hair; slowly she smiled at the man opposite her.

She stepped a pace backward.

"Come," she said.

Fred Harding looked at her.

"Come," she said, tilting her chin a little upwards.

He looked at her again, and two emotions struggled on his face.

She raised her hands towards him.

He went.

She led him to where a modern window had superseded the loopholes, and a balcony had been constructed from it to the outer wall.

"Look!" said Esmeé, when they stood in the midst of this wooden platform, for the whole of the country down to Nice, and the blue Mediterranean nearly as far as Corsica, lay spread out before them.

Fred followed her gesture, then seated himself by her side, but in a moment he altered his position, so that he might look not at her, but towards the banqueting-hall.

He spoke of the place, of its associations, and, as he touched on the strenuousness of the old life, there was a note of discontent in his voice.

At first Mrs. Strangeforth let him talk, pleased that, if anything were to share his interest with her, it should be something so remote; but soon she recollected that she had not brought him to St. Laon—had not staked so much—merely to hear a discourse on mediæval customs. She could attend to that just as well—or as badly, and with far less risk, and with far less impropriety—in the reading-room of the hotel.

She endeavoured to give the conversation a more personal turn. He slid away from it; it seemed as though they had outworn themselves in his mind.

Then fear, the sickening fear, of women such as she came upon her. Had she dared so much to no end? It was not often that she set conventionality at nought in this fashion, not often that she dispensed with the complaisant chaperonage of old Miss Crawford, and openly invited "her friend" to accompany her alone.

And what had come of it?

While these thoughts whirled in her mind, he pulled himself on to his feet. He looked towards the banqueting-hall, made an irresolute step, paused, passed through the window, and disappeared amid the shadow.

Esmeé sat there—alone.

Once she bit her lips; once she opened them to call him. She raised her handkerchief to her mouth, and laughed when she saw that there was blood on it.

Five minutes later she rose and went in to him. Her eyes smiled, but a tight line was stretched from the nostril to the corner of the mouth.

"I am going," she began. (How long ago was it since he would have swung round at the first sound of her voice?)

She waited.

"I am going," she repeated.

"I beg your pardon."

"I am going," she said for the third time, "to the church. Do not follow me for half-an-hour; not"—insistently—"for half-an-hour at the very least."

"Certainly," he acquiesced.

And as he turned to decipher the lettering under a group of armorial bearings, she felt rather than heard that he drew a long breath.

III

MRS. STRANGEFORTH went down the steps of the house listlessly, and as listlessly mounted those of the church opposite.

There was neither curiosity nor devotion in her purpose. She simply wished to efface herself, that Fred might miss her, that he might have to come in search of her.

She entered by the great door, drew into the cool shade of the first side chapel, and seated herself with her head leaning against the wall. Her whole figure relaxed, her face became drawn. For the moment she was herself, as she felt, not as she wished to appear. She put up her hand and laid it on her heart. Was the pain there? Was it over her whole being? She was drinking of the bitterest cup that is ever forced to a woman's lips. She knew that satiety had already set in with the man she loved, to her shame.

Esmée was fully aware of the course that expediency pointed out; as certain that it would have to be forced on her before she would take it. She knew—had known all along—that Fred would "tire," as she expressed it; she had knowledge enough of the world to be aware that men always do, did, and will grow weary—that they have the admitted right to do so—when they have previously dispensed with reverence for the woman who fascinates them.

Presently she heard the creaking of the great wooden door. Her pulse leaped.

So soon! So soon!

The colour came back to her face, her eyes shone. She leaned forward.

"Ah!" she gasped, and the sound came as though it had been wrung from her.

It was merely a woman of the village who entered, and surely the most poverty-stricken inhabitant of that poverty-stricken place.

Her tattered skirt hung limply round the clumsy, worn boots; the handkerchief crossing her bodice was frayed and discoloured.

The girl—for she was, oh! so young—moved wearily into the chapel, a puny child in her arms, and sank upon the last of the seats.

She had hardly taken her place when the great door swung open again to admit the woman who had guided the English strangers round the village; but this last comer, when she saw the figure huddled on the chair, halted, swept aside her skirts, and threw up her head.

The gesture was unmistakable, and Esmée Strangeforth, as she watched unseen, drew a sharp breath.

"Here?" she whispered, fearfully.

So here, too, passion had its sway and sin its consequences. So

here one woman fell, and the many punished her. The isolated village had its pariah as well as the populous city, and the end of them was the same in both places.

The well-born woman bent forward, watching the peasant outcast intently, painfully.

The poor creature was evidently accustomed to ostracism. She neither resented it nor was surprised at it. Silently she withdrew; and she who was left waited until the last echo of the departing footfall ceased before she sank on to her knees.

So penitence might not even confess itself a miserable sinner side by side with respectability. At the recognition of that a pang, which had in it something personal, pierced another heart.

A little later the chapel was deserted, and Mrs. Strangeforth, peering out from the gloom, waited with a curious intentness.

In a moment there was a shuffling sound as of boots so dilapidated that they prevented noiseless treading, and the outcast stole back to her seat, crossed herself, looking, even as she made the sign towards the figure of Our Lady, with a deprecating glance, as though she was fearful that the very use of the blessed symbol might be laid to her account as presumption.

Then she kneeled—behind the last of the chairs, on the very last flag of the chapel floor—and bowed her head. Her prayer finished, she rose, and not once lifting her eyes, with her head sinking lower and lower, she advanced, fearfully, towards the rails of the altar.

A pace from them she paused, hesitated—and it seemed as though even now she must turn away. She looked into her child's face, and over the shame, the despair, the darkness, broke the light of her mother's love. In that cause how much would she not dare? She kneeled again.

There was a little rustle in the gloom, and another woman sank on to her knees. Esmee pressed her handkerchief to her lips; but it was too late; the cry—"If I had but had that," had escaped from them. She looked with hungry, longing eyes towards the puny child in the outcast's arms.

The cry had been loud enough to echo through the chapel, but the woman by the altar-rails never raised her head. Her whole soul lay between the wasted child and the figure on the shrine.

The drawn, bloodless lips worked. Surely the Mother of Sorrow would have mercy on a little child, who had no lot or part in its own advent.

The girl kneeled on, the tears flowing down the haggard face that not long since had been so beautiful.

She held out her frail burden.

Her baby was stricken; stricken, she feared, to death.

There was little of childishness, nothing of beauty, in the ghastly, prematurely-withered face; but she was its mother, and her motherhood cried for its life.

Then Mrs. Strangeforth, unable to contain herself, came a step out of the shadow and bent forward, her heart beating to suffocation, seeing her own kinship with a strange, lurid distinctness.

Fictions and conventionalities were swept away, and the bare fact, as it was, thrust itself before her.

She pressed her hands over her eyes, as though to shut out the word conscience imprinted before them. Then her arms fell to her sides. She shrank in upon herself. She waited, breathless, silent.

Once, and only once, she moved her arms slowly, one after the other, pitying them, it might be, for being always empty.

"If I had but had that," she whispered again, and she crossed her hands, pressing them tightly over her breast.

Yet she did not move. With heaving chest and dilated eyes she kept herself still by the very force of her training. She must see it out, see the end. Of what?

Of the erring who had repented.

The tension was not prolonged.

Once more the outcast moved. On her knees she dragged herself nearer, nearer to the altar-rail. She made the sign of the cross over her baby, held it out in her arms until it all but touched the blue silk of the Virgin's robe.

Her intention was evident. "If I may but touch the hem of His garment I shall be healed," had cried the woman of old. It was the echo of that cry—and, as the baby remained motionless, she put out one hand to direct the wasted arm. But, as her fingers closed on it, she opened them again. Her expressive face was swept with a flood of desolation. She dared not as much as guide her child to the source of healing, she, a thing so contaminated.

She waited—her eyes rounded, and staring from their sockets in the agony of her suspense. At length the child moved, but moved not to appeal for its healing, but to bury its face in its mother's breast with a hungry cry.

The moan of the sick child was answered by the agonised sob of her who had given life to it.

The child of the wicked must neither seek mercy nor expect it. Such it seemed to the peasant mother. She accepted the rebuff. She rose, tottering, swaying, and would have made her way out into the street, but a hand was laid on her shoulder, a quick voice spoke broken, tumultuous words in a tongue she could not understand.

Amazed, impelled, bewildered, she who was so scorned and slighted found herself hurried to the altar again, found herself kneeling side by side with the "stranger lady" whose appearance had been the wonder and excitement of St. Laon.

"Pray!" cried Esmée, the tears streaming down her face; "pray for me, for me too. Hold up the baby, hold him up now! now! And," she went on, carried away by the strain of the moment, as she stretched out her hands towards the tinsel-crowned figure, "have

mercy, mercy. Mercy!"—clamouring—"not justice. Mercy, oh! you know how it is. It all begins so easily. He understood and the other did not. He cared, and the other didn't, didn't seem to. I"—brokenly—"had no one, and the days were so long. To-day was just like yesterday, until he made each one different. Have mercy! Mercy!"

She beat her hands, rocking herself to and fro. She fastened her eyes on the child with a look which seemed to indicate that her salvation too lay with it.

"Strength," she continued, speaking her words between hard sobs—"strength to go. Strength to take me back. Back," her voice ringing in its wail, "to the loneliness, the coldness, the sameness of that old life. Ah God!"—and even now she shuddered—"that life! But strength, strength!"

Esmeé cried her disjointed words aloud, her tears washing in lines down her face, and making splashes on her white gloves, even on her gown, while the girl who kneeled by her side watched her, not understanding one word of the harsh English tongue, but conscious that their misery had in some way a connection.

Then, as Mrs. Strangeforth made her appeal, the girl's motherhood swayed her. Let her take advantage of these prayers, no matter whence their origin, even if the stranger-lady were a heretic and as surely condemned to everlasting torment, the Blessed Mary, who had known such sorrow here on earth herself, could not remain unmoved before those tears.

She stretched her arms over the rails, and not daring to raise her eyes from the ground held the child closer, closer to the holy shrine.

There was a pause. One woman's face grew ashy beneath her southern colouring, while, with the other, sobs, entreaties ceased, and her eyes opened to their fullest extent, her lips remained apart.

The suspense, the emotion of hours was compressed into a fraction of space.

The child stirred. Esmeé's pulse throbbed with a sickening thud. The baby moved his arm, and four eyes were glued upon the wasted member. The little fingers drew back towards his mother's breast, and two women felt hope die within their hearts. Again came a pause, and the very silence and the dimness seemed to hurt. Then, with one feeble crow the baby raised himself, touched, nay, clasped the Virgin's robe.

A little later two women, walking side by side, appeared upon the steps of the church.

Each face bore traces of a storm; each was calmed with a great resolution.

Fred came towards Mrs. Strangeforth.

"Well!" he began, "it was a liberal half-hour even for a woman." Esmeé put aside the jest; she turned to the figure at her right hand.

"This woman," she said, her voice lower more even than usual, "is going back to Nice with us."

Fred Harding looked at her. She met his gaze. He saw that something had taken place.

"You wish her to go with us?" he asked quietly.

"Please," she answered in the same key.

"Very well," he acquiesced.

Again he looked hard into her face, and then he made no effort to dissuade her.

IV

IT was not until they were more than half-way to Nice that there was any real speech between Mrs. Strangeforth and Fred Harding.

"I must find some lodgings for this woman and a doctor for her baby; it is ill," she began. "Where shall I put you down?"

"Are you thinking of looking for lodgings for her as soon as you reach Nice?" he questioned.

"Yes," she said.

He looked to the left of him, away to where the everlasting snow glowed red on the mountain tops with light reflected from the west.

He had ceased to be touched by the strangeness, the earnestness of Esmeé's attitude. It began to irritate him. He even found himself wondering if this was the latest wile of coquetry.

"Let me remind you," he said, and his tone was very dry, "that the *cercle de Méditerranée* gives its ball to-night, and Madame's toilette—so I have always been given to understand—is a work of some time."

Esmeé waited a moment. She wanted to speak and could not. It is so hard to say deliberately, in cold blood, words which are to change one's whole life.

"I shall not go," she answered.

He made a sharp movement, then restrained himself.

"Think," he remarked in that half-bantering, half-sarcastic voice which she always found so difficult to withstand, "of the cotillon without you. Think of the little count, of Monsieur d'Egaré, even of that waltz I think you promised me."

Esmeé made no reply. Her eyes were bent on him. They examined him, took account of the smallest detail. It was as though she were trying to imprint the image of him in her mind for all time. Once her lips worked cruelly; once her eyes filled with tears; once her face was all drawn with its pain. But Fred was looking at the mountains again, taking the hour quietly, indifferently, while she was fighting the hardest battle of her life.

She felt inclined to cry to him that she could not have taken his anguish so, not even had she grown ten times more weary of him than he was of her; and then she realised that he did not as much as know that anything unusual was taking place.

"Not even he!" she whispered incredulously.

The utter isolation of life seemed all at once to come home to her. Did no one ever really understand anything about another? Did no man ever see below the surface of his neighbour's mind? Why, Fred would never even guess why one glove had split as she held her hands clasped together on her knee. Not even Fred! Fred!

She drew herself erect, and fixed her eyes before her. She had looked her last; she dared not see what would be on his face when she spoke again.

"I am going home—to England—to-morrow," she said.

Mr. Harding was so amazed that he flung away his cigarette.

"Home!" he exclaimed. "To him?"

"To my husband," she corrected, "if"—with a catch in her voice—"he will have me."

The man by her side laughed harshly. He did not know whether he was relieved, glad, sorry; he only knew that he was the superlative of some emotion.

"Is that your latest whim?" he mocked, and he had not the least idea why he sneered.

But, for once, Esmée Strangeforth saw further than he did. She recognised that it was anxiety, over-mastering, uncontrollable anxiety, and anxiety not for her, but for himself.

"No," she answered, and each word fell singly, as water falls drop by drop, "it is my purpose."

MARIAN BOWER.

MYSIE

TO see you walk among the roses,
To hear your happy laughter borne
Across the garden half the morn,
To watch you in the quiet closes
Of rosy evenings, how your face
Fills the dusk world with musing grace :

To breathe your beauty, use your treasure
Of pure simplicity and truth,
Glad childhood in the flower of youth,
Large wisdom in the guise of pleasure ;
A gracious soul and fair to find
In that white mirror of your mind :

Wherefore in these will sorrow waken ?
Why, through delight at tenderest,
Blind pity stir within the breast,
Laughter by tears be overtaken ?
Why have I sighed with sudden care
To see you good and glad and fair ?

Sweet friend, I know what perilous places
Of undivined adventure wait
To spoil you of your joyous state,
What bitterness shall mar your graces :
I know the failing hope, the pain,
Love's self, dread Love, desire, disdain.

I see not where the journey closes :
I know the Hours, which now demand
Their gifts scarce-given, at your hand,
To-night, amid the falling roses,
Shall at a moment there repay
The light of life they took away.

JOHN HALSHAM.

AN UNCROWNED QUEEN

By NOEL WILLIAMS

II

IN 1807 Madame Récamier left Paris on a visit to Madame de Staël at the Château de Coppet. While there she met Prince Augustus of Prussia, a handsome young man of four-and-twenty, who had been taken prisoner at the battle of Saalfeldt, where his brother Louis had been killed, and was now held as a hostage by Napoleon. The Prince fell passionately in love with the beautiful Parisian, and used every persuasion to induce her to divorce her husband, and marry him, in which laudable endeavour he appears to have been ably seconded by Madame de Staël. Their joint efforts were not, however, attended with success, although Juliette, either because she returned in some measure her suitor's ardent affection, or more probably because she was dazzled by the brilliant prospect held out to her, did give a conditional consent, and actually went so far as to write to her husband to request him to release her from her marriage vows. After reading the kind and dignified letter in which Jacques Récamier replied to this extraordinary proposal, she was filled with remorse and compunction, and declined the honour which the Prince wished to confer upon her. She and her royal adorer, however, continued to correspond until they met again nine years later when he entered Paris with the allied armies. She sent him, moreover, the famous portrait of herself by Gérard, already referred to, in exchange for the same painter's picture of "Corinne," with which the Prince had presented her. Her own portrait was, by the terms of the Prince's will, returned to her after his death in 1845.

On her return to Paris from Coppet, Madame Récamier adopted, with the consent of her husband, her niece Amélie de Cyvoct, who afterwards married M. Charles Lenormant, a distinguished antiquary. To the writings of this lady, *Souvenirs et Correspondances de Madame Récamier*, and *Madame Récamier, Les Amis de sa Jeunesse*, we are indebted for much that we know about her celebrated relative.

It was well for Madame Récamier that she had found a new interest in life, for she was to experience yet another proof of the enmity of the despot whom she had been bold enough to defy. When in 1809 Madame de Staël, exasperated by the strict surveillance to which she was subjected at Coppet, determined to seek an asylum amongst her husband's relatives in Sweden, Madame Récamier insisted on setting

out for Switzerland to bid her beloved friend farewell, although she received a warning from Fouché, the Minister of Police, that the Emperor would be sure to resent any communication with a woman whom he so detested. The result was that on her return journey she was met at Dijon by a notification that she was banished one hundred miles from Paris, a sentence which was pronounced about the same time, and for a similar reason, on her devoted friend Matthieu de Montmorency. As under Napoleon's tyrannical rule the friend of the exile became as criminal as the exile himself, Madame Récamier found herself cut off not only from Paris, but from the society of all her friends, except those persons who happened to be in the same unfortunate position as herself.

It was not until after the fall of Napoleon in 1814 that Madame Récamier returned to Paris. The greater part of her exile was spent at Lyons, in which city she found the Duchesse de Luynes, an old acquaintance banished like herself, and Camille Jourdan, who had some years before retired from politics in disgust, and was by him introduced to the philosopher Simon Ballanche, the author of "*Antigone*," who became one of her most devoted friends. In January 1813, on the advice of Matthieu de Montmorency, she decided to gratify a long-cherished wish and travel in Italy. She visited Turin, Parma, Modena, Bologna, and Florence, and arrived in Rome in Holy Week, where, as everywhere else, she soon became the object of universal attention and admiration. Amongst those who fell under the spell of her beauty in the Eternal City was the famous sculptor Canova, who executed from memory a bust of Madame Récamier, which he entitled "*Beatrice*," and in which, we are told, "he did not attempt to copy Madame Récamier's features so much as to embody the lineaments of her soul." In December of that year Madame Récamier left Rome for Naples, where she arrived at the moment when the king, Joachim Murat, after long hesitating between his duty to his own dynasty and his duty to Napoleon, had at last decided to throw in his lot with England and Austria against his old master and brother-in-law. Madame Récamier was visiting her old friend Caroline Murat, when the king entered the room and asked her what course she would advise him to adopt, hoping that she would approve the decision he had already made. "Sire," she answered, "you are a Frenchman. To France you must be true." "Then I am a traitor," cried the unhappy man, and opening a window of the palace which overlooked the sea, he pointed to the English fleet sailing majestically into the Bay of Naples, and then, covering his face with his hands, burst into tears.

In the following year Madame Récamier, although her sentence of banishment had never been formally revoked, returned to Paris at the same time as the Bourbons. Soon afterwards Madame de Staël arrived from the other extremity of Europe, and the two devoted friends met once more, soon, however, to part for ever.

Madame Récamier returned not only to Paris, but to something of

her former wealth, for in the interval her husband had in a measure recovered his losses, whilst she had inherited her mother's fortune of some £16,000. In person she was as lovely as ever, and the prestige of her self-sacrificing friendship for Madame de Staël, and Napoleon's cruel persecution of her, enhanced the fame of her beauty, and her salons were as brilliant and as crowded as ever. The Duke of Wellington was at this time in Paris, having entered it with the allied armies, and, like every one else, he came to pay homage to the world-renowned beauty, and, like every one else, fell in love with her. We learn that he was a frequent visitor at her house, and that he was in the habit of writing her "unmeaning notes which all resembled each other," and that Madame de Staël wished her to obtain influence over him. Madame Récamier was undoubtedly flattered by the attention paid her by the Duke, but her biographer tells us that, in spite of his fame, she did not find him either "animated or interesting," and therefore did not follow Madame de Staël's advice, and try and obtain influence over him, "which," adds the writer, "without a doubt she could have easily obtained." On his return to Paris after Waterloo, Wellington hastened to call upon her, but Madame Récamier, who did not expect him, was annoyed at his visit, and when thinking that she would be overjoyed at the defeat of her old persecutor Napoleon, the Duke exclaimed, "*Je l'ai bien battu*," Madame Récamier, if we are to believe her biographer, closed her doors against him in disgust.

This same year 1814 brought her another admirer in the person of Benjamin Constant, the famous orator and pamphleteer, whose services she had enlisted at the request of the Murats to plead the cause of their dynasty, the fate of which the Congress of Vienna was about to decide. Constant was a man of brilliant parts, but of a fickle and emotional temperament. He had aspired but without success to be the second husband of Madame de Staël, and he now fell desperately in love with Madame Récamier, to whose influence the extraordinary political tergiversations, in which he indulged during the last days of the Empire and the first of the new Monarchy, have frequently been ascribed. For many months he bombarded the object of his devotion, who, it may be mentioned, does not appear to have given him the smallest encouragement, with love-letters even more ridiculous than those which Lucien Bonaparte had penned fifteen years before. These letters have had a singular fate. They have been twice published, and twice interfered with by judicial proceedings (the last so late as 1883) instituted by M. d'Estournelle, the great-nephew of the writer, who not unnaturally felt that their publication was hardly likely to increase his illustrious relative's reputation.

When in 1815 Napoleon returned from Elba, and the exiles fled "like naughty schoolboys when the master's step is heard returning to the schoolroom," Madame Récamier refused to leave Paris, and was rewarded for her courage, for Napoleon, even if he was aware of her presence, thought it best to ignore it, and left her in peace.

In June 1817 Madame Récamier sustained a terrible blow by the death of Madame de Staël, who returned from Italy, whither she had betaken herself on Napoleon's reappearance on the scene, only to die. It was at the deathbed of her beloved friend that Madame Récamier was able to form a friendship with a person no less distinguished—René Chateaubriand, the author of that masterpiece of literary art *Le Génie du Christianisme*, which may be said to have almost paved the way for the re-establishment of the Catholic religion, and the famous pamphlet *De Bonaparte et des Bourbons*, a scathing indictment of Napoleonic ambition, which Louis XVIII. once declared had been worth a hundred



MADAME RÉCAMIER.

(From the picture by David.)

thousand men to him. Chateaubriand was at this time about forty-seven, still handsome, with fine courtly manners. He had travelled widely, and was consequently free from the narrow prejudices which characterised so many of his countrymen. He seems at once to have conceived an intense admiration and devotion for Madame Récamier, and her influence dominated the remainder of his life. She on her part seems to have been irresistibly drawn towards this brilliant man, whose respectful admiration was such a refreshing contrast to the rhapsodies of poor Benjamin Constant, and the intense weariness of life, which he affected, only proved an additional attraction in her eyes. Henceforward it is Chateaubriand who occupies the foremost

place in her affections, and those faithful friends Matthieu de Montmorency and Simon Ballanche have to be content with secondary positions.

In 1819 Jacques Récamier suffered fresh losses, after which Juliette, who had sacrificed part of her own private fortune in the interests of her husband, separated from him and took a small apartment in the convent of the Abbaye-aux-Bois in the Rue de Sèvres. We are told that she was influenced by "prudential motives" in thus deciding to lead a life of seclusion. Her cell in the convent was almost as poorly furnished as that of a nun; but here she received the whole world of Paris, and the receptions at the Abbaye-aux-Bois became almost as celebrated in their way as those in the Rue du Mont Blanc had been in former days. Hither came Chateaubriand, who arrived every day with such extraordinary punctuality that "he used to laugh and say that people regulated their watches by him as he passed"; her old friends Simonard, Adrien and Matthieu de Montmorency, Ballanche, and Madame Moreau, widow of the famous Republican general; distinguished foreigners like the Duchess of Devonshire, Maria Edgeworth, and Alexander von Humboldt; and literary men and politicians of every shade and school of opinion, Villemain, De Tocqueville, Guizot, Thierry, Saint Beuve, and Prosper Mérimée. Here Chateaubriand read to the company the opening chapters of his famous *Mémoires d'outre Tombe*, which afterwards, when in embarrassed circumstances, he disposed of to a syndicate of his friends in return for a pension, with the proviso that they were not to be published until after his death, probably the first time a man has sold his life to live upon it. Here also Delphine Gay as a young girl recited a poem of her own, which was afterwards crowned by the Academy, and the younger Ampère was introduced to Parisian society. The friends of Madame Récamier at this time occupied some of the very highest positions in the service of the State. One of the most devoted, Matthieu de Montmorency, was Minister for Foreign Affairs, and in 1822 Chateaubriand was appointed ambassador in London, and revisited the city, through whose streets thirty years before he had trudged a penniless and starving adventurer. Towards the end of the same year, through the influence of his *chère amie*, he was sent to represent France at the Congress of Verona. About the same time Madame Récamier was advised to winter in Rome, and set out for Italy, accompanied by Ampère and Ballanche. In Rome, where her friend the Duchess of Devonshire was the acknowledged leader of society, she found several ex-kings and ex-queens of the Empire, including her old admirer Lucien Bonaparte, Jerome, ex-king of Westphalia, and Queen Hortense, the mother of Napoleon III. They were living in a style very different from that which they had maintained when three parts of Europe bowed before the will of Napoleon, lacking not only the luxuries, but even sometimes the necessities of life, and studiously avoided by all the other French in Rome, were

only too glad to be noticed by those whom in their palmy days of sovereignty they had been accustomed to patronise.

In the spring of 1825 Madame Récamier returned to Paris, and again occupied her little room in the Abbaye-aux-Bois, and once more the chief society in Paris—headed of course by the faithful Chateaubriand, who had recently been deprived of his place in the ministry without a word of explanation, and had revenged himself by a series of vigorous attacks on the Government in his paper, the *Journal des Débats*—flocked to her receptions. Her pleasure at finding herself once again in the society of the friends she loved so well, was spoiled by the death of one of the oldest and most devoted of them all, Matthieu de Montmorency, who died while at prayer in the Church of St. Thomas Aquinas. As a young man Matthieu de Montmorency had been gay and dissipated, but the death of a beloved brother, the Abbé de Laval, had completely sobered him. Matthieu had supported the Revolution to which the Abbé had fallen a victim. He was inconsolable at his brother's death, of which he accused himself of being the cause, and straightway abandoned his wild ways, and under the influence of Madame de Staël became a sincerely religious man. He always used his friendship with Madame Récamier in the best possible way, and it is perhaps not too much to say that it was in a great measure owing to him that the somewhat pronounced flirtations, in which she indulged in early life, never developed into anything worse.

In 1830 Madame Récamier lost her husband, who passed away at the ripe age of eighty, gay and good-natured to the last, and Juliette, we are told, "felt as if she had lost a second father." In the same year, while she was at Dieppe, came the second great Revolution which she was to witness, and on returning to Paris she had to alight from her carriage on entering the suburbs, and walk to the convent through streets lined with barricades eight feet high. With the fall of the elder branch of the Bourbons, Chateaubriand's political career practically came to an end. He had published several brochures attacking the accession of the Orleanist dynasty, and he and several other Royalist chiefs were arrested and imprisoned on a charge of having instigated a Legitimist rising in La Vendée, but were soon released. He continued to champion the cause of Legitimacy in the *Journal des Débats* and other papers for some years longer, but after a time his ardour cooled, and he decided to abandon politics altogether and devote himself to literature.

During the next few years Madame Récamier's life was chiefly passed in Paris, where she continued to occupy the same little room in the convent and to receive her friends as before. Chateaubriand was always there, and always devoted to her, and among the celebrated men who found their way most frequently to the Rue de Sèvres were Alexis de Tocqueville, Saint Beuve, and Louis de Loménie.

The winter of 1840-41 was signalled by a terrible disaster—the overflowing of the banks of the Rhone and Saône, which brought ruin

and misery to numbers of unfortunate people at Lyons. In order to relieve the sufferers, Madame Récamier organised a *soirée musicale* at the Abbaye-aux-Bois. The tickets were sold nominally at twenty francs each, but so great was the desire to see this famous leader of society in her humble home that many tickets realised as much as one hundred francs. Rachel, Pauline Viardot, Garcia, Rubini, Lablache, and other distinguished artists gave their services, and the room was crowded to overflowing with all that was most distinguished in Parisian society. This, it may be added, was the last occasion on which Madame Récamier appeared in society.

In 1845 Madame Récamier lost the use of her eyes by cataract, but still continued to receive her friends. Regularly every afternoon at half-past two Chateaubriand called to see her in spite of the fact that he was now nearly eighty, and so lame, owing to a carriage accident, that he had to be carried upstairs by two servants. After an hour's *tête-à-tête* between these aged but still devoted friends other visitors were admitted, and she invariably received company during the evening.

In 1847 Madame de Chateaubriand died, and a few months later Chateaubriand offered his hand as he had already given his heart to Madame Récamier, but she had the good sense to refuse her consent to a union, which would only have brought ridicule upon them both; and in the following summer Chateaubriand, attended to the last by his beloved Juliette, passed away to a land where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage.

Madame Récamier did not long survive him. In 1849 the cholera broke out in Paris, and she was amongst those who were attacked by it. Worn out with old age and grief at the loss of her beloved friend, she was in no condition to battle with the disease; and on the 11th of May she expired at the house of her niece, Madame Lenormant.

"Cholera," says Madame Lenormant, "usually leaves frightful traces upon its victims, but by an exception, which I cannot help regarding as a last favour of Heaven, Madame Récamier's features assumed in death a surprising beauty. Her expression was angelic and grave; she looked like a beautiful statue; there was no contraction, neither were there any wrinkles; and never has the majesty of the last sleep been attended with so much grace and sweetness."

It is perhaps a little difficult to understand at first in what lay the peculiar charm of Madame Récamier. She was beautiful, we know, but many other women have been as beautiful, and yet have not succeeded in arousing anything which can be compared to the admiration and devotion which Madame Récamier commanded throughout her career. The secret is probably to be found in her charm of manner, her perfect ease and grace in conversation, and her extraordinary tact, which enabled her to fill her salon with people of every shade and variety of opinion, and every class and rank in society, and yet to so contrive that every one there, whether Catholic or agnostic, whether

Bonapartist or Legitimist, whether prince of the blood or struggling *littérateur*, should be made to feel perfectly at their ease. Moreover, as one of her friends once remarked, "Elle étoit le génie de la confiance," and it is this even more than her winning kindness, which attracted and attached people to her. "All who were admitted to her intimacy," says another, "hastened to her with their joys and their sorrows, their projects and their ideas, certain not only of secrecy and discretion, but of the warmest and readiest sympathy. If a man had the *ébouche* of a book, a speech, a picture, an enterprise in his head, it was to her that he unfolded his half-formed plan, sure of an attentive and sympathising listener." It is indeed to her wonderful tact, and to her still more wonderful power of sympathising with the opinions and feelings of others, quite as much as to her beauty of face and form, that Juliette Récamier is indebted for her place among the most celebrated women of the nineteenth century.

A MAETERLINCK OF THE MIDLANDS

JOHN DONALDSON, of the firm of Merryweather & Donaldson, publishers, had set out on the most interesting mission of his life. Yet as he approached his destination the exhilaration that had buoyed him in starting became slowly replaced by a deep and unaccountable gloom.

His mission was something in the nature of a voyage of discovery. No member of the literary or journalistic world had ever set eyes upon Gregory Roper, the so-called Maeterlinck of the Midlands, and in accordance with Roper's desire the publishers had kept his exact address secret. But when Merryweather learned that his young partner was projecting a cycling tour in the Midlands, it seemed to him a fitting opportunity for the firm to become acquainted with its most distinguished client. "There are several business matters to be discussed with reference to the forthcoming volume of poems," said Merryweather, "and the village does not lie very far outside your projected route. Also, to confess the truth, I have an inordinate curiosity as to the personality of the man."

The personality of the man! This was the problem that Donaldson had been meditating as he cycled over the smooth and undulating country roads. Of course, Donaldson reasoned, Roper no more resembled Maeterlinck than Maeterlinck resembled Shakespeare: presumably the very falsity of such misnomers gives them a satiric existence. The radiant Philosopher of "*La Sagesse et la Destinée*" and the grim Poet of the Midlands could claim no kinship, unless it were in common mastery over unknown terrors such as haunt the obscure recesses of Maeterlinck's plays, and wander, huge and inchoate, through Roper's volumes. Both these writers knew how to evolve an atmosphere big with formless fears: both made the simple sounds of intercourse and the noises of nature—a knock at the door—the rustling of trees—loud with the weight of coming catastrophe. But while in Maeterlinck's work this primitive terror verged into higher symbolism and bore some faint spiritual gleam at the core, in Roper's poems it was bedded in a dense physical medium with highly-developed material sensations. Roper's series of poems, entitled "*The Dance of Death*," imported all the grim sincerity and crude realism of Holbein into the morbid and sensitive atmosphere of modern times: the horror of physical pain jarred through the exquisite verse: the horror of death shrieked under the delicate subtleties of style. Beneath every shape of beauty, beneath every smiling ridge of landscape, the skeleton and the rack: hence the fierce power of the poems; hence their monotony of despair.

Donaldson shuddered at mere recollection of the gruesome images dancing in primitive nakedness through a frail world of music and

flowers. But the memory of these was hardly a sufficient reason to account for the almost tangible sense of tragedy which crept over the publisher as he neared the village where Roper lived. The day was grey and windless; the shadow of the clouds lay heavily over the fields. Moisture was upon the grass and leaves, depriving them of their whispering buoyancy: even the feathery life of the hedgerows drooped listless and wan. But instead of being soothed by the quietude of nature, Donaldson's mind was beset with images of decay: an increasing luxuriance of vegetation suggested the unwholesome blotches of fungi in the warm depths of woods; the lichen on tree and fence drew everywhere the spectre of Disease. Some sordid calamity seemed to lurk in the copses, and the flesh shuddered as in the presence of a physical dread.

"The 'Dance of Death' has grip in it," mused Donaldson, "the whole country seems infected."

By this time he had come in sight of the village, lying in a deep and narrow valley. Cottages straggled irregularly in the heart of a coarse and rank profusion of green: their back walls were built down into a sluggish brook. An old mouldering church stood on a slight eminence, with large and billowy churchyard. Over the valley hung a damp mist.

The village, although stifling in its own luxuriance, was not without certain ascetic lines of character and power that seemed to have been developed by a tenacious old age. There was something primitive, almost elemental, in its outlines despite their fair clothing of green. A horror brooded over the place, and it was with an uncontrollable sense of misgiving that the publisher wheeled his cycle into the valley. What manner of adventure was he about to brave? What tragedy of bitterness, of loneliness, would he encounter?

The village street was quite empty. A hard-looking woman knitting at one of the cottage doors told him that Brook Cottage was just outside the churchyard gate. It proved to be poorer in size and appearance than the other cottages. The strip of ground in front of it was ill-kept; the tiny windows were curtainless. Donaldson rapped at the door. After a pause a tall, ungainly, fair-haired man opened it part way. "Well?" he said.

"Does Mr. Gregory Roper live here?" asked Donaldson.

"I'm Roper," responded the man briefly; "you want to go over the church, I suppose? I'll just get the keys."

He disappeared, leaving Donaldson speechless. Of course there must be some mistake. This rough-looking individual who seemed to be the village sexton . . .

"I'm ready," said the man, shutting the door; "this way, please."

"This is Brook Cottage, I suppose?" faltered Donaldson.

"It's Brook Cottage right enough, and I'm Roper," said the man. "We don't often get tourists, but the Plague brings them occasionally."

"The Plague. . . ?"

"Historians chiefly. This place is a living record of the Plague of

1666. It has kept intact every incident, I may say every sensation, of that dreadful time. The Plague almost depopulated the village, which, during the Commonwealth, was a large and flourishing place. The hills were quite bare of vegetation then. You see them now." Donaldson shuddered. "The germs were conveyed here in some tailor's patterns from London, they say. Two-thirds of the villagers were buried in a pit under yonder mound. If you come this way I will show you the grave where the clergyman and his wife lie."

He opened the churchyard gate. The publisher stared at him, utterly bewildered. Could this possibly be Gregory Roper? He was a strongly-built man of some fifty years of age, with shuffling gait and powerful cadaverous face. His eyes were unnaturally bright and restless; a crooked mouth gave his face a certain grotesque originality. In spite of his splendid frame Donaldson noticed signs of extreme physical frailty—the skin was pale and transparent, and the hands abnormally thin.

"Are you really Gregory Roper—are you the poet?" asked Donaldson.

"The poet?" repeated the man; "yes, I write verse."

"I'm Donaldson—one of your publishers," the other hastened to say. "Mr. Merryweather asked me to call on business matters. But what you've just told me about the Plague—together with my own feelings as I approached the village, and the haunting sensation of your poems——"

"I don't hold with seeing people as a rule," said Roper, "but it was friendly of you to come. Yes, it's a curious thing how the memory of the Plague should have survived all these centuries in this remote corner of England. Children hear tales of it from their cradles upward—every stone of the valley is horrible with its associations. So great a hold has it taken on the imagination of these stolid villagers, to whom no excitement ever comes, that they talk of it day after day, as if it were a recent event. Men are born here who live and die under its shadow, whose fancy refuses any other than its gruesome food."

"Your own poems," began Donaldson, with a gleam of intuition.

"No doubt, no doubt," replied Roper. They stood in the church porch, looking down over the swelling graves. "I'm grave-digger here as well as sexton, and I turn over the dust of the Plague-victims. I've many opportunities of thinking about disease and decay, and I suppose my fathers and forefathers have done the same: we've been sextons for generations."

"So it is out of that ancient and forgotten scourge that your poems have flowered!" exclaimed the publisher; "your terrible genius has been gaining inspiration and impetus through centuries! But, Mr. Roper, why continue amid these awful associations? They must end by driving you mad. And why pursue so painful and arduous an occupation? You will pardon me for reminding you that you have

ample means at your disposal, and we expect your next book to be extremely profitable."

"You don't see any charm in grave-digging?" asked Roper, smiling. "It seems to you simply sordid, necessarily distasteful to a cultivated man? I may reckon myself conventionally such, I suppose, since I have passed, with the aid of scholarships, through the University. Well, grave-digging has one supreme fascination, the fascination of reality—it keeps you in touch with the most vital of all truths. I grew weary of this age of intellectual quibbles and spiritual moonshine. I needed actual contact with life and death."

"But surely a change—a little travel—would be good," suggested Donaldson. "Come to London, and give us a Dance of Life as well as a Dance of Death. You do not look strong. You wear yourself too much, both mentally and physically. Remember, not only your publishers, but the whole world has an interest in your well-being."

Roper shook his head. "I'm not strong; I know I'm failing," he said; "but I can't live elsewhere. I've tried. I've been to London. I've travelled abroad. It was all shadowy—all thin. Here, at least, I find intensity—a tragedy—dreadful, if you will, but a tragedy nevertheless, palpitating with life; here, at least, I find emotion, exhausting in its potency; here alone I can pursue the occupation that brings me inspiration; it is the lilt of the spade that you hear in my lines. Here alone my gifts have complete scope. . . ."

He gasped, his lips grew pale, and he collapsed against one of the pillars of the porch. Donaldson sprang to his aid: "You are ill—you are suffering?"

"A little—dizzy," replied Roper; "it has come over me before."

Donaldson, much alarmed, helped him to a seat in the porch. Lines of horrible pain grew about Roper's face. Assistance must be procured at once; but how summon the sluggish villagers? Donaldson seized the bell-pull in the porch and rang one frenzied note. It pealed on the silent air, startling the echoes, with sound as sinister as the bells of those midnight collectors of plague-corpses. . . . There was no movement in the village. . . . At last Donaldson heard the sound of wheels . . . a man was dismounting from a dog-cart at the churchyard gate. "For God's sake, come!" he cried; "a man is ill—dying perhaps. Oh, is it possible you are a doctor?"

"Yes, I am a doctor. I suppose it's Roper. Poor fellow, poor fellow. I knew he could not hold out long."

Roper had fallen into a swoon. The doctor felt his pulse—went through a brief examination. Then he turned to Donaldson, his eyes lighted with the enthusiasm of science. "This is another case of a very singular phenomenon peculiar to this spot," he said. "The man is suffering from an ordinary non-infectious fever, likely, I am sorry to say, to prove fatal; but you will hardly believe me when I tell you that every symptom of the Plague is here faithfully reproduced."

ETHEL WHEELER.

OXFORD AND HER COLLEGES

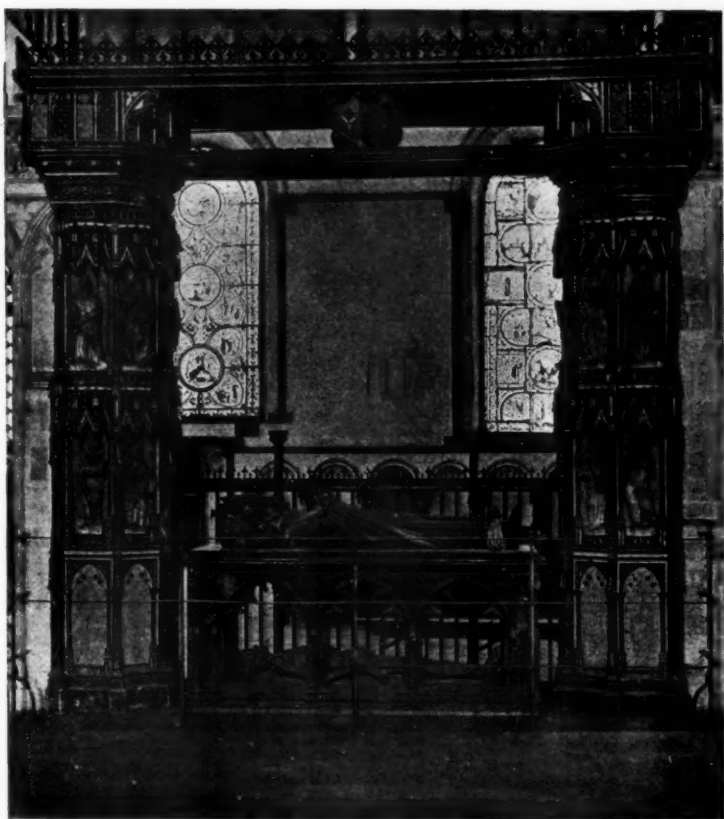
V. ALL SOULS

By C. GRANT ROBERTSON¹

AS the visitor walks past St. Mary's porch and crosses the ancient Cat Street (which an ultra-modern municipality with unjustifiable politeness has expanded into Catherine Street) he lights on a group of buildings, one flank of which winds northwards towards the Bodleian, while the main entrance faces south on to the High Street. Looking up at the square battlemented Tower, he spies over the portal two antique figures on guard in their niches, and a carved bas-relief with a most puzzling design. The figures prove to be those of the saintly Henry VI. in his crown and sceptre in hand and Archbishop Chichele in his mitre, the two co-Founders of the College, while the whole relief strives to represent the souls of the departed rising from Purgatory by the efficacy of the prayers of the faithful, thus symbolising the idea which the name of the College represents. You step inside the door to learn that you are standing in the front quadrangle of All Souls. And you will do well to pause, for this quadrangle fitly claims quiet and studious enjoyment. Not even elsewhere in Oxford can you find so genuine a fifteenth-century memorial, so little altered since it left the architect's hands near five hundred years ago. Save for the grass (in place of flagged stones) and the squared cusps of the doors, you are really touching the skirts of the Middle Ages. Peeping from under the archway you see over your right shoulder the windows of the two wainscoted chambers which were the Warden's first "lodgings," where, being sworn to celibacy, he lay in mediæval luxury until matrimony was introduced, and with it more spacious and comfortable quarters. Pray remark their position, cunningly designed that the Warden may observe all that went in and out from his College, and with a door which formerly led up into two rooms in the Tower, the first muniment room and Treasury of All Souls, also to be under the Warden's watchful eye; for there were stowed in "twoe chests" the charters of privileges, the title-deeds and the archives, the Jocalia, the money, "the plate and other goodes," of which it was the duty of the Warden and Bursars annually to take stock. But, like the Warden, they too have in course of time been removed to a more spacious home; and the last occasion

¹ The writer would cordially thank Messrs. F. E. Robinson & Co. for permission to reproduce two illustrations from his volume on "All Souls," in their *University and College Histories*.

on the right, diapered with quaint stained glass and coats-of-arms, are those of the old Library (now used as a Lecture Room), where for three hundred years the MSS. and the old books, many of them the pious gifts of kings, archbishops, statesmen, lawyers, and Fellows, were housed, until Codrington, in the eighteenth century, bequeathed them a more magnificent mansion. And fronting you is the chapel, while



CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL : THE TOMB OF ARCHBISHOP CHICHELE.

all round run the chambers of the Fellows. If it is a pleasant summer morning the quadrangle will be full of undergraduates going to, or coming from, lectures on every branch of law or modern history. But they do not belong to All Souls, which is a unique College, since there is no other like it in Oxford or Cambridge, or, indeed, in any other university in the world, for it is constituted wholly of Fellows, some

thirty in number, with a warden at their head, and of undergraduates it owns but four, scholars, called "Bible-clerks," because they read the lessons on week-days in the chapel.

The Charter of Foundation tells us that All Souls was founded in 1438 by Archbishop Chichele, who figures in the history books as a great Lancastrian lawyer, churchman, and statesman, and in Shakespeare's "Henry the Fifth" as the inspirer of the war with France, which began with Agincourt and ended with the loss of all the English possessions save Calais on the other side of the Channel. Chichele's design was, with the help of his Majesty Henry VI. and his Holiness the Pope, to create a Society of Doctors and Masters of Arts, forty in number, twenty-four of whom were to be priests and sixteen jurists or lawyers, obliged by their statutes to study law and theology, and in addition more especially were "bounden to pray for the souls of the glorious memory of Henry V., the Duke of Clarence, and for the other lords and nobles of the realm of England," fallen in the great war, "and also for the souls of all the faithful departed."

For this purpose every Friday they were to have a solemn service, and All Souls Day, on November 2nd in particular, was to be the chief day of the Church Calendar for the whole Society; hence the early name "All Soulen College," and All Souls it has remained ever since. Many centuries have slipped by since the munificent archbishop (he spent on the College, in buildings and endowment, a sum equal to £150,000 of our money) went to his rest; and the beautiful tomb in Canterbury Cathedral, recently restored by All Souls to all its fifteenth-century glory of fretted canopy and decorations in red, blue, and gold, marks his place among the Primates of England; but All Souls, unlike the other Oxford colleges, has faithfully kept the characteristic features of its Founder's plan. The Fellows, it is true, are no longer bounden (the law does not allow it) to pray for the souls of the fallen or the faithful departed, nor to study theology, but they still form a Society of Masters and Doctors, and they have no undergraduates living as members of the College within their walls save the four Bible-clerks. In short, All Souls is, as it was to start with, simply a College of Fellows.

And now let us walk forward to the left along the trimly-shaven grass to where the door under the archway will admit us into the ante-chapel and the chapel itself. Every visitor in Oxford comes this way, and, such is its fame, that has apparently been the custom since the earliest days. In spending half-an-hour within its walls you are only following the example of the pilgrims before the Reformation, who journeyed hither to earn a special Indulgence "for praying for the souls of the dead at rest with Christ, repeating the Lord's Prayer, *cum salutatione angelica*," or later of Charles I. and Charles II., James II. and William III., and Pepys and Clarendon, and many other persons of quality and distinction. The chapel too has a stirring history to add a halo of romance to the severe beauty of its Gothic arches, its antique

oaken stalls with their grim-carved "Miserere" seats, its splendid hammer-beam roof adorned with angel heads, and its glorious reredos. On its adornment the Founder and the first generation of Fellows lavished their wealth and their piety, and from them came the reredos,



ALL SOULS COLLEGE: THE REREDOS.

figuring in its slowly-soaring rows of canopied images the souls of the faithful rising to meet our Lord seated in Judgment at the Last Day, the seven altars also, and the relics, which included a fragment of the true Cross, and a tooth of S. John the Baptist—long since vanished,

no one knows how. It was probably, too, the first College chapel to possess an organ, but this too you will seek for in vain. For the Reformation came, when the altars were dashed down, the organ destroyed, the screen taken away, and the statues knocked from their niches, and for eighty years the chapel of All Souls remained a mutilated and pitiful wreck, until the age of Laud stirred the consciences of the Fellows to decency and order. After the Restoration, when there was no more fear of Puritans, they plastered up the reredos, and over the surface painted a sprawling fresco, "Old Chichele rising from his tomb," and "too full," as Evelyn says, "of naked for a chapel," and presently added the existing classical screen. But they did not replace the organ, and from 1549 till to-day it has remained the only College chapel which can have no music at its services. So completely were these changes carried out, that for two centuries the world, and even All Souls itself, forgot that it had ever possessed a real hammer-beam roof and a reredos. Finally, in 1869, when some patching repairs in the fresco were being made, to the astonishment of all, traces of the original stonework beneath were discovered. Further researches were put in hand, and with the help of Sir Gilbert Scott, and the munificence of Earl Bathurst, then a Fellow, the plaster and fresco of the seventeenth century were at great expense stripped away, and behold, from underneath there was revealed the original reredos as it had been left in 1549. A true restoration was decided upon, and everything brought back as far as possible to its earliest form. A series of fifteenth-century personages was drawn up to fill the niches (Earl Bathurst alone was allowed to be present of the moderns, and to him a place of honour in the bottom row was assigned), and for the heads of these many of the Fellows were asked to sit as models. Two amusing stories are current on this feature of the restoration. One member of the College, it is said, anxious to share in the immortality of his colleagues, applied too late, being informed there was only room now amongst the lost souls! According to the other, a short-sighted lady visitor inquired of a former porter who "the noble-looking lady in the garden hat" might be (in reality a well-known Cardinal, John Beaufort), and received the bewildering reply: "That ain't no woman, ma'am; that is Sir Francis Doyle, wot writes in *Punch*." For, truly enough, the Cardinal has the face of the distinguished Professor of Poetry and the author of "A Private of the Buffs."

Be that as it may, the Chapel of All Souls is now, as the guide-books say, one of the sights in Oxford "which no visitor can afford to miss," but how few of the hundreds who yearly are dumb before its incomparable reredos know the tangled history enshrined in its ancient stones! The antechapel is lined with the monuments of dead Wardens and Fellows. We might linger here for hours, but we can only notice three. On the left of the door is that of Warden Hovenden, of the sixteenth century, in his starched ruff, perhaps the greatest Warden the College has ever had. His name has not got into the history books, yet

for forty-two years he ruled All Souls with as great firmness as wisdom. If you will go up into the old Library you will see how beautiful he made it, adding an exquisite carved stucco roof, the arms of the



ALL SOULS COLLEGE: DETAILS OF REREDOS.

(Lord Salisbury.)

archiepiscopal Founder at one end, and the royal arms of England at the other, and all round on the panelled walls those of the fifteen colleges

which had been founded in his day. It was he who built a new quadrangle, with new "Lodgings for the Warden," a set whose oriel windows now look up and down the High Street; and it was he who for thirty years battled with and triumphed over the greedy attempts of Queen Elizabeth and her courtiers (the ladies in particular) to rob "the leane schollers" of All Souls of their landed property. Near this monument may be seen a slab with the simple word "Codrington" on it, under which lie the remains of Sir Christopher Codrington, who fought under William III. in the trenches at Namur, the friend of Addison and Young, and who was Governor of the West Indies, and finally left £16,000 in money and books to the value of £6000 to found a new library worthy of his College. Not far from him is the monument to George Clarke, for fifty-six years a Fellow, and a minister of all five sovereigns from Charles II. to Anne, whose benefactions to All Souls would fill a very long list, and who by his munificence practically refounded Worcester College.

And now let us pass on. As we cross the quadrangles we have the Bursary on our left. A peep into it would show us, beside the rows of deeds and account-books, a tattered drum and two ancient matchlocks borne by the Fellows in 1685, when they marched out to help in suppressing Monmouth's rebellion. It was an exuberantly loyal and Tory College in those days, and in the memoirs we can still read how the Fellows, on James's accession, drank his Majesty's health on their knees in the quad. in beer out of buckets, and then shouted like school-boys round the blazing bonfire!

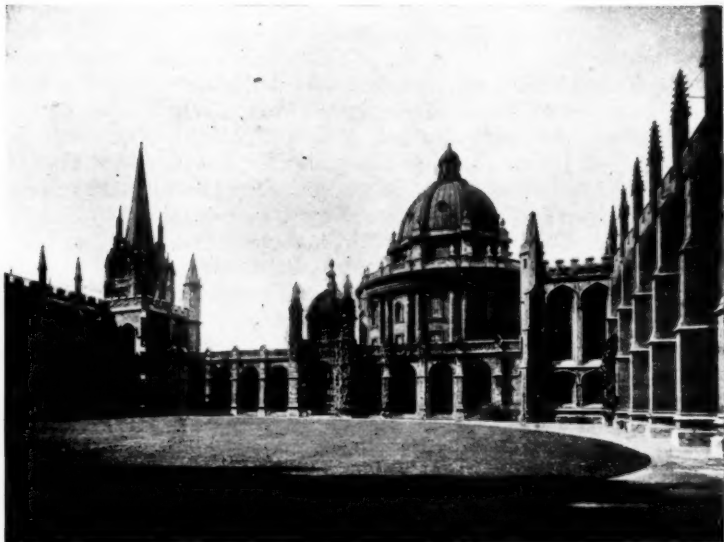
The archway under the old Library has brought us into the Warden's Quadrangle, so called, perhaps, because it was built by Warden Hovenden, and contained the new "Lodgings of the Warden." The name is even more appropriate to-day, because George Clarke, in the eighteenth century, added to Hovenden's work by buying yet another plot of ground and building on it a house and garden, in which the Wardens have resided ever since. This is the last time since the Wardens have migrated, and almost certainly they will not be asked to migrate again; but what a change this quiet, roomy eighteenth-century house, with its pleasant lawn and shady trees, marks when set beside the two wainscoted chambers which Chichele and the first Fellows thought handsome quarters for the head of All Souls. Handsome, yes! for the Fellows themselves slept three in a room, and were especially privileged in that they each, by a liberal injunction, were allowed to have his own private bed!

Returning to Hovenden, the ground which he acquired, and so first expanded Chichele's College, was partly waste; but some of it in Hovenden's day had apparently become the garden of the "Rose Inn," and contained a famous spring or fountain, "whereof," as the Warden writes in his crabbed sixteenth-century hand, "it was said merrily the Fellowes wash'd every day in Rose water." Alas! they can do so no longer. From this lilac-scented quadrangle the steps behind

us lead straight to the Hall, a handsome apartment redolent of the precise and formal eighteenth century. Of the old Hall, whose site it occupies, we know very little save that it contained coats-of-arms and inscriptions in its windows, and that it ran at right angles to the present building. The two most conspicuous features of the new Hall, as we may well call it, are the stained-glass windows erected by the present generation to the memory of six of its most distinguished Fellows, viz. Lord Salisbury, Heber, Blackstone, Jeremy Taylor, Lord Talbot, and Christopher Codrington, and the noble array of portraits, which will tell us conveniently of the many famous members of the College. Over the centre of the dais rightly towers the Founder, Archbishop Chichele—a purely imaginary but a very dignified portrait—whose bust by Roubiliac facing it leads the eye up to the Minstrels' Gallery. Beneath him is Lord Salisbury, the present Chancellor of the University, in his full official robes, recalling the days when he was a Fellow as simple Lord Robert Cecil. Around these are grouped Archbishop Sheldon, Fellow, Warden, and Archbishop, the friend of Charles I. and Laud, and the statesman primate of Charles II., the eloquent bishop, the greatest of seventeenth-century divines, Jeremy Taylor, and not far from them is Archbishop Vernon Harcourt, Sir Christopher Wren, Sir Christopher Codrington, and two Lord-Chancellors, Lords Northington and Talbot. On the left are two of the most splendid names that All Souls can boast—Thomas Linacre, the founder of the Royal College of Physicians, and “the father of modern medicine,” and Thomas Sydenham, “the father of modern medical science,” who repeated, by his discoveries in the seventeenth century, what Linacre had achieved in the sixteenth. And just above them stands Reginald Heber, the great missionary bishop, immortal for his famous hymn “From Greenland's Icy Mountains.” And amongst the crowd of lawyers, statesmen, bishops, and ambassadors who won renown in their own time we may pick out the poet Edward Young, who had so great a dislike to having his portrait painted that this is the only one in existence. His “Night Thoughts” made him very famous once, but they are barely read nowadays, Shakespeare getting the honour of many of the lines which he coined no doubt under the peaceful shade of the trees which he planted in the College living at Welwyn. These men and many others have, as the years pass, striven by their work and their example to make All Souls what they desired it to be, “A Temple of the Muses.”

But we cannot linger, for there is still much to be seen. Opposite the Hall is the Buttery Hatch, where daily the Fellows were served with their “rations” of beer and bread and cheese; and if you can get a glimpse into the queer little vaulted room you would see above the hatch, on the inside, a carved relief of a bird, the “Mallard,” the emblem of the College. And thereby hangs a tale. The College is happy to possess an ancient song with a chorus celebrating the glories of “The Mallard,” a song which is still solemnly sung twice a year

after the College gaudy by one of the Fellows called "The Lord Mallard." No one knows who wrote the song, but it is certainly two hundred years old, if not more, and tradition says that a mallard was found in a drain when the foundations of the College were being dug. Any way, the origin of the mallard as an emblem of All Souls is lost in the dim mist of the past, and we only know that once a century the Fellows had a grand "Mallard procession," when, headed by the Lord Mallard, they marched round the battlements in their surplices, with flaming torches in their hands, singing the Mallard Song. The last time this occurred was in 1801, and it is more than probable that 1901



ALL SOULS COLLEGE: QUADRANGLE.

will see this ancient and picturesque ceremony revived ; for All Souls is both proud and conservative of its customs and traditions.

Leaving the Hall and Buttery we can plunge into the great Quadrangle, which will give you one of the finest views to be found in Oxford. On one hand are the twin towers built by Hawkesmoor, Wren's pupil ; in front of us is the Codrington Library, and on our left the spire of St. Mary's and the dome of the Radcliffe topping the dovecot over the Iron Gateway. This is the most modern part of All Souls, as will be guessed at once from the striking contrast in the architectural styles from that of the Front Quadrangle. Nor is the place what it had once been. In the early days All Souls owned a more modest space, which was partly covered by a small court and the

cloisters which opened out from it, and the remainder was left open to be used as a grove or orchard where the students might take the air, if mediæval students ever thought such exercise necessary.

The old cloisters have now entirely disappeared, to our loss, for the old drawings show that in appearance they were very like the famous cloisters at New College, from which Chichele, himself a Fellow of New College, probably borrowed the plan; and they were used for religious processions, "for suffrages in private," and as a burial-ground for the Fellows—a privilege especially granted by the Pope in his Charter of Foundation. A trace of this ancient right may still be observed by the curious in a slab outside the chapel door in the piazza which records the virtues of Holdsworth, the College butler, in the great "time of the troubles," the Commonwealth and Civil War, when he was "extruded" by the Puritans because he was so stout a Royalist and so "saucy" of speech. But now, alas! all vestiges of the cloisters are gone. The Fellows of the seventeenth century naturally desired to give themselves more room than could be found for forty persons packed into the sixteen chambers of the Front Quadrangle, and when Codrington left his magnificent legacy they framed a great scheme by which the new Library was to form one side of a new and great quadrangle, to be balanced on the other by the chapel and a new Hall, and flanked by the two towers whose crockets and minarets to-day shoot up in rivalry to St. Mary's spire and Radcliffe's dome. The memory of the old cloisters was to be simply suggested by the piazza, beneath which the student can on rainy days now take gentle exercise dry-footed. The scheme was a costly one, and took many years to complete, the funds being largely found by liberal private donations; and if you are inquisitive you may spell out who gave the different parts by studying the inscription plates with their coat-of-arms on the walls recording the donors' names and generosity, amongst whom you will be surprised to find that of the Duke of Wharton, who was never a Fellow.

The happiest feature of the new buildings is unquestionably the Library itself, the work of Hawkesmoor, now fitly crowned in its southern face by the great sun-dial that preserves the memory of Christopher Wren's Fellowship and his scientific genius. But if the exterior is good, the interior is still better. There is not a nobler building in all Oxford, nor a finer example of the Italian Gothic in England, at least the experts say so, and it would be treason for an All Souls man to disbelieve them. Standing at one end and gazing down its shapely lines, the spectator feels that in length and breadth, in height and depth, in colour and in tone, it is as near perfection as an interior can be—a wonderful incarnation of chaste symmetry and what can be achieved in beauty by severe simplicity and the artist's eye for proportion. And for two hundred years the College has striven to make its contents as a library worthy of the home in which the books are housed. The volumes number more than eighty thousand, and every year sees

their tale increase; and as you ramble past the shelves months might be spent in exhausting the treasures which lie behind the wired cases. Above all we discover that the history of a college's studies is epitomised in these serried succeeding files of books. Law—one-half of All Souls being lawyers—naturally predominates, and in Law the Library is the finest outside London, rivalling indeed the mighty libraries of the Inns of Court; but you will also find some thousands of volumes on theology, from the earliest edition of the Fathers to the latest of the Bampton Lectures and the Higher Criticism; here we come on a group of medical books, taking us back in their weird plates and still weirder ideas to the days when Galen, Hippocrates, and Aristotle were authorities, when cupping and bleeding were *de règle*, and men did not know of the circulation of the blood, past the time when Linacre was revolutionising his science, or later, when Sydenham was inaugurating a new epoch—and there we have plunged into History in all its branches, the study that the College now pursues in the place of theology and medicine. Still further on in the manuscript cases you could see beautifully illuminated missals and service-books, whose idolatry so stirred the ire of Puritan reformers, and countless volumes of papers from the sixteenth century onwards, many of them of the highest historical value. One treasure is so unique that it demands a couple of lines to itself, for it is nothing less than four ponderous volumes containing the original drawings of Wren for St. Paul's and other buildings, bequeathed by him on his death to the College of which he had been a Fellow. As you turn its pages and pore over these splendid specimens of delicate draughtsmanship you can trace the architect's ideas from their earliest and rudest sketches down to the finished and detailed plan which now adorns the heart of the city of London. And what for the College is equally interesting is the fact that the completed plans are approved by Charles II.'s own signature, countersigned by a Fellow of All Souls, Henry, Lord Coventry, then Secretary of State.

In the Library itself, though the upper tiers are adorned with the busts of famous "worthies," there are but two statues, and they each deserve their place. The first is naturally that of the donor—Christopher Codrington, placed in the centre of his library—a curious eighteenth-century piece of work, representing him as a Roman commander in the *sagum*, and bare from his knees to his sandals, barer even than the kilted Highlander. College tradition reports that on the long winter nights he haunts the place, and there are detailed stories of how he has been seen in the freezing gloom descended from his pedestal, pacing up and down, perhaps to keep himself warm (for no fires are allowed), but no doubt admiring the home that All Souls has erected out of his money. The other statue is that of the greatest of All Souls lawyers, Blackstone, immortal for his "Commentaries on the Laws of England," which were first delivered as lectures to the University in the College Hall. He has not won his place there

because he was a great lawyer and a great judge, nor because he was a great bursar, nor a great personality who dominates the eighteenth-century history of All Souls, but because to his self-sacrificing labours more than those of any one else the Library owes its present beautiful form. As the College Records show, Blackstone worked for fifteen years and more to see that the Library was worthy of its donor and his College, and now he too has his reward. We may well fancy that the first time Codrington climbed down from his pedestal to pace the silent floor he went to thank the portly figure with *Magna Carta* in his hand and his *Commentaries* beside him for what he had done.



ALL SOULS COLLEGE : QUADRANGLE AND TWIN TOWERS.

And now we have finished our scamper over the College buildings, which has, let the scribe hope, told us something of the outlines of the history of this academic society. There only remains the inevitable question, What of the modern College? What does it do, and what is its work? It is, as we have seen, a College of Fellows, men chosen by examination in history or in law from other Colleges, men who have already taken their degrees, and presumably have distinguished themselves in the University examinations. It is, therefore, not primarily a place of education for young men, as the one-and-twenty other Colleges are, and has therefore no athletic records, no successes on the river or in the cricket and football fields, no long list of undergraduate university prizes to chronicle. Its members are men who as undergraduates

belong to one College, but as graduates to All Souls. And what do they do? Well, to answer that even briefly, we must go back a little. Chichele's idea had been to found a society of priests and lawyers, *i.e.* men whom a college in a great university could train to serve the Church or serve the State, as he himself had so finely served both; for, from the priests and the lawyers in the fifteenth century the servants of the Crown were almost wholly taken. And this ideal continued to be the ideal of All Souls after the Reformation, save that men were no longer priests in a Church which acknowledged the Pope, but when they did not study Law they were obliged to take orders in the English Church. And thus it was that All Souls continued to train statesmen and lawyers, and men who became professed theologians, or who rose from being vicars and rectors to be canons, deans, and bishops. Finally came the nineteenth century, and a period of stirring Reforms and Parliamentary Commissioners, who remodelled the Universities, and drew up new statutes in accordance with new national needs. All Souls had practically no undergraduates, and she was not compelled to take any: so far continuity with the past was maintained; but the obligation to take orders if a man was not a lawyer was removed, and the subject of examination for a Fellowship was ordained to be either Modern History or Law—because it was thought those were now the subjects in which men could best be trained to follow the Founder's ideal of providing fit servants for Church and State. So that primarily All Souls to-day is a College composed of half-a-dozen professors in Law and History, and of some thirty students who have graduated in Law or Modern History. These are wide subjects, and those who pursue them may attain distinction in many and varied walks of life. Some become professors in their own or other universities; some teach and lecture to the students of other colleges, and it is their classes that fill the quiet quadrangles with the hum and bustle of undergraduate life; some become Members of Parliament; many fill high offices in the Civil Service; some become Head-masters of the great Public Schools, Bishops, Judges, Cabinet Ministers, Ambassadors. Some write books—you will find many such in the Library—and some write articles. If you take the trouble to trace the careers of many distinguished public servants to-day, from the present Prime Minister at the Foreign Office to the Viceroy who is responsible at this moment for the destinies of our Indian Empire, you would find that no few of them began their careers as Fellows of All Souls, as students of law or students of history. Of those now living, whether men whose names are household words, or men whose undergraduate career terminated yesterday, this is not the place to speak—but of them all in famous words slightly altered, "All Souls expect that every Fellow will do his duty." And that surely is the best answer that can be given to the visitor who, puzzled by the absence of undergraduates, would know what All Souls has been in the past, how it has come to be what it is to-day, and what it professes to be its duty as a College in the University of Oxford.

THE WHITE IRIS

JUST where the river widens out into a large basin called the Broadwater, a boat was coming slowly along the middle of the stream. The lady who was steering cast her eyes around and silently absorbed the beauties of the scene.

On the right of her a large wood sloped right down to the water's edge; branches of alder and young beech dipped low in the water; the full, fresh foliage of leafy June was visible in the mazy depths which rose in verdant crowns one above the other, until the whole melted into a thin line of deepest blue.

"An ideal day," said the lady, who was of a poetic temperament.

"Jolly hot rowing against stream," said her husband, who was nothing if not practical.

The lady looked across to the opposite shore, where the water-meadows lay steeped in the June sunshine. This side of the river was heavily fringed with a perfect forest of tall reeds and water grasses, whence sprung up such quantities of lovely irises as to elicit the exclamation—

"Stop! you positively *must* stop and get me some!"

"What? Where? Oh I see?" And the boat was forthwith pulled into the reeds, and soon a large bunch of the pale golden blooms lay in the stern of the boat.

The lady stood up, boathook in hand, to try and reach some fine forget-me-nots just beyond her grasp. She could see over the waving reeds, and right in the centre, some half-dozen yards from the bank, there grew, several inches higher than their yellow companions and of far nobler proportions, some exquisite white irises.

"White ones," cried the lady, "how perfectly beautiful they are!"

Her husband pushed the boat farther into the reeds.

"Ah! they are really magnificent! perfectly white; save just where the petals have curled back they are tinted a lovely rose-pink. They must be very rare, but oh how tiresome! they are staked round. I wonder if I could get my hand between the stakes. Push the boat a little closer, dear.

But a voice hailed them from the bank.

"Hi, sir! you'll please not to touch them white flowers." And a gamekeeper came into view.

"May I not pick just one?" pleaded the lady.

"When I tell you the reason I think you'd rather not be picking of them." He addressed himself to the lady; probably he thought there was that in her face which would help him. "It's river growth. I am not sure that my mistress is within her rights in staking the flowers

round; I am not sure, if you were so minded, but what you could take some away; but I think when you've heard the story that you would rather not."

"Please tell me the story," said the lady, and, encouraged by the sympathy in her eyes, the gamekeeper told her.

"'Twas like this," he said. "Madam, who lives up at the hall" (he gave a backward wave with his arm, indicating where the grey walls of a large house nestled closely to the hillside; an occasional break in the woods showed stretches of closely-shaven lawn which, alternating with thick shrubberies, rose in terrace-fashion right up to the mansion), "Madam was married some ten years before the Almighty thought fit to send her and the Squire any childer. Then they was blessed with a pair of girls—twins—and Madam, seeing as they was born in the month of June, had them named Rose and Iris; 'for,' says she, 'this is the month of roses and irises, and my little maids shall be flower queens.' And the Squire he just laughed at her, and bade her not be so fanciful. But nary while the little maid called Rose died while she was still in arms, and then it seemed as if the little maid Iris was to be tended and cared for past everything. Lord! how they doted on that child. But the saddest of all is to come, ma'am. Just five years ago, when the little maid was about five years old, when she was grown to be as sweet and winsome and lovely as mortal child could be, she was drowned. She'd wandered away by herself, and come down here. No one missed her at first, for Madam thought she was with her nurse, and the nurse believed her to be with her mother; and nought was known until the nurse went out to the summer-house, where she expected to find the child with Madam. The terrible time that followed I can't speak of. They searched the house and gardens in vain, and then Madam screamed out suddenly, 'The river! O God, the river!' and there they found the poor little thing lying in not much more than two feet of water, just where them flowers is staked round, and with her pretty hands full of the yellow irises."

"Ah!" said the lady pitifully, "and the poor mother had those beautiful white irises planted to mark the spot?"

"Nay, that's the marvel. They was never planted at all, and no one in these parts ever remembers white irises growing hereabouts. The blooms is always yellow. But the place was staked round, as it is now, directly after the accident, and just a year after that dreadful day, when Madam came down to look at the spot, she found these white flowers growing. And now, ma'am, you'll quite understand how 'tis my lady don't wish to have them disturbed. She is quite alone now, for the Squire he just moped to death two years ago."

"Poor mother! poor soul!" said the lady, and there were tears in her eyes as she thought of the nursery at home where, thank God! little feet pattered and voices rang shrilly.

The boat was pushed out into the stream again, and rowed farther and farther away. "Poor little Iris!" said the lady presently; "and

no one could tell how it happened, or knew what idea she had in her childish mind when she went picking flowers in the water yonder. I wonder how it happened! Perhaps the river-god knows."

The river-god did know, and being an observant spirit he saw that the sympathetic temperament of the lady would understand his story if he whispered it to her softly now, while the boat glided swiftly along. As the lady's husband rowed her still farther from the scene of the tragedy, a dreamy look came into her eyes, and her countenance wore an abstracted look, which caused her husband to say to himself, "Greta is in the clouds again." But it was not so. She was only listening to what the river-god had to tell her.

Then, as now, it was June. Just such another brilliant day as to-day, when the sun's breath, getting stronger day by day, drew perforce the fragrance from the roses that clustered on the south wall of the Hall, and from the rosary across the lawn. It drew the sweetest essences from honeysuckles and pinks. From the kitchen garden the exhalations of many herbs and old-fashioned flowers arose and, wafted over the high garden wall, met the hundred other perfumes that were distilled around. Gradually they stole through the open casements of the house.

Claudia Germaine, sitting at her writing-table close by the window, breathed the exquisite fragrance, and resolved that it was a sin to remain in the house any longer. She turned to the corner of the room where Iris, the darling of her heart, lately chid for some childish offence, was still expiating her fault by sitting quietly on a chair.

"Mother is going into the garden into the summer-house. Is Iris good enough to come?"

"Iris quite dood now."

"And you will never do so again?"

"Never any more." The large solemn eyes looked steadfastly into her mother's face, the pretty lips puckered ominously.

"Darling!" and the mother clasped her little daughter closely to her, and covered her sweet face with kisses. How passionately she loved her child no one knew but herself, and though she heroically persevered in the little corrections that were now becoming part of her maternal duties, they gave her intense pain.

"Come along, then, sweetheart mine. Run and get your big sun-bonnet, and tell Nana where we are going."

Then the two went forth together, and crossing the lawn came to the rosary where was the summer-house. They wandered up and down the grassy paths, Claudia picking a blossom here and there, while Iris was sniffing at every bloom within reach of her dainty little nose.

"Nuffin' smells just like roses," she lisped; "sister Rose dead, but lots of sister roses left for Iris."

Her mother smiled at the quaint conceit. "And are the irises down by the river your sisters too?"

The child looked up at her, a whole world of wonder in her dark eyes.

"Are they God's little girls?" she asked solemnly.

"They are God's flowers, dear."

"Then, Mummy, they *is* my sisters," said Iris triumphantly, "'cause Nana says I am one of God's flowers."

"You strange little mite," said her mother, "now go and pick the daisies there, to make a chain, while I read," and Claudia went into the summer-house.

The day was hot, and as she read she became very drowsy. She had a faint consciousness of the child flitting backwards and forwards in the sunshine, of her running into the summer-house with some new-found treasure; finally, she was aware of the little one pulling away at her skirts and asking if she might return to the house.

"Yes, Iris can run indoors and find Nana."

She watched the little figure running and skipping along—for whenever does a child walk?—until she reached the house, and then giving way to that somnolence that would not be denied, the mother leaned back in her chair and dozed comfortably.

"Mummy is falleded asleep!" said Iris in an awe-struck voice, a few minutes later.

She had been indoors, but failing to find her nurse, she had run back to the summer-house. The child had often been rebuked for disturbing her mother's siestas, now she forbore to wake her.

"Me good *now*, and Mummy is falleded *quite* asleep," she whispered; "must not wake her," and she passed out of the summer-house.

For a moment she was puzzled what to do. Then a flash of remembrance came.

"Go and see Iris's sisters, go and paddle in the water, and bring sisters home to tea. *Can't* ask Mummy, she is fast asleep," and away the little one trotted blithely. And as fate willed it, no one chanced to see the tiny maid wandering off alone. No one saw her dancing along the shady alley that led to the terrace; no one saw her climb down the steep descent, half rolling her little round body down the grassy slope.

"It's just lovely," she cried, her eyes dancing with excitement, as she realised the delightful independence of this, her first great enterprise unaided.

"All alone, quite all by meself, and me will pick flowers for Mummy—and Dada—yes, and Nana too!" she cried ecstatically.

She clapped her tiny hands with glee, and then turned to chase a purple emperor which chanced to come sailing by. If the insect had only gone in the direction of the house! But, like the child, it felt some mysterious attraction to the water and flew towards the river.

Across the stretches of springy turf, through the shrubberies, nearer and ever nearer to the water, the little one flitted on in the wake of the

purple emperor. At last she could see the shining surface of the river mirroring back the sun, the great reeds that fringed the banks waving in the breeze, the sedges, and the tall fine river grass. As she sped nearer, she spied at last the erect yellow blooms she had come to seek.

The little human Iris stayed to gaze on these fair denizens of the riverside. A moorhen was swimming in and out of the reeds; farther out, near the middle of the stream, a brood of dabchicks were diving about fearlessly.

As the child lingered a minute, a breeze blew off the water and stirred the long reeds and grasses. A whispering and rustling, which sounded like a long sobbing sigh, went up from amongst them.

"Sisters cryin', sisters callin' for Iris," said the child.

Was it so? Was it a call? I cannot tell—but Heaven knows.

Iris sat down on the sun-warmed bank and took off her shoes and socks.

"Paddle in the water," she said, with a distinct remembrance of last summer's joys at the sea. "Going to be *four* to-morrow days; going to have a party 'cause it's my birfday, and pretty sisters Iris shall all come," she went on, nodding her small head towards the flowers as if they understood her every word.

Then she dropped her small body down the bank and into the water. With a little shiver at the coldness of the water, she went bravely forward and began to pluck at the nearest flags.

"They *is* hard to pick," she said, and her little palms got sadly cut as she clutched at the sharp-bladed spears of the reeds. "Never mind! Mummy will kiss it well again," with that sublime faith which every child has in mother's power to heal all troubles.

Then Iris found that the brightest and finest flowers grew farthest from the bank, and though the water only came a few inches over her ankles to begin with, she found her little skirts were beginning to touch the water.

"Nana will be cross; must not get wet," and turning about to retrace her steps, she found that she had gone so far within the forest of reeds as not to be able to see the bank.

Vainly she plunged about and parted the reeds this way and that. Alas! she but increased the distance from safety, and with childish unreasoning was wading into yet deeper water.

It was up to her little armpits now, and she caught her breath sadly. Then a piteous quivering of the pretty lips was the beginning of such sad, sad cries of "Mummy! Mummy! me *can't* get out! O Mummy, dear *darling* Mummy!" Then, with sudden passion, "Daddy! dear Daddy! Mummy *won't* come to Iris, Daddy, come!"

And no one heard the plaintive cries; only the old moorhen, irritated to find her retreat invaded. No one was there to see how the little limbs got numbed and cold and refused to carry their burden; no one saw how the pallor of fear crept over the baby face and dulled the beautiful eyes; no one was there to take and comfort the trembling

little form that was dragged by the current into the deeper water, farther and farther along, until——

One tiny gasp—one faint gurgle—and then, an ever-widening ripple which appeared in the water to show where Baby Iris rested among her sisters.

Out yonder, in mid-stream, the tadpoles and minnows were frisking about in the tangles of green weed, the moorhen clucked loudly to her chicks to return to the shelter of the maternal wing, and the purple emperor flitted still where the sunshine bathed the atmosphere.

But Iris, sweet little Iris, slept calmly in her reedy bed.

The following June, and every June since has witnessed the blossoming of those exquisite white irises with the rose-tinted petals, just the shade of pink that one sees on the flushed face of a child. They spring from the very spot where the little Iris was found, and though you may search for miles along the riverside, you will not find any like them.

How marvellous! Dear lady, there are many wonderful things to be heard from the river as it comes down to the sea, but then—it only tells such secrets to the river-god.

CATHERINE ADAMS.

RICHARD JEFFERIES

RICHARD JEFFERIES has found "fit audience, though few." Popular he never has been, and probably never will be, but those who are familiar with his work know how much they owe to him. He has opened their eyes to an infinity of beauty and interest of which perhaps they had never dreamt before. He has taught them to watch for themselves the silent and busy life that goes on all around in "Field and Hedgerow," in the stream and the copse, on the downs and by the sea-shore. He surely had some secret sympathy with all wild creatures that quickened his marvellous powers of observation, and enabled him to interpret their ways. There are few more touching passages in modern English literature than the lament of Richard Jefferies, consumed by pain and disease, watching through the glass for glimpses of that out-of-door life from which he was cut off for ever, and eating his heart out to think that he had no part in it, and was unwatched for, unmissed, by the creatures with whom he had lived in such intimacy, the flowers whose haunts he knew so well.

Jefferies gave himself heart and soul to Nature, but found her after all an irresponsive mistress. He asked from her what she could never give, sympathy, an answering look—some sign, however slight, of interest in the passion she had aroused. It is an old story, this silence of Nature, in the face of man's yearning and desire. Once again it has been voiced for us by a modern poet, whose words seem an echo of Jefferies' own, at least they are fraught with the same longing and regret—

"In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's grey cheek.
For ah! we know not what each other says,
These things and I; in sound / speak—
Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.
Nature, poor step-dame, cannot slake my drouth;
Let her, if she would owe me,
Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky, and show me
The breasts o' her tenderness:
Never did any milk of hers once bless
My thirsting mouth."¹

Yet those who know the poem from which these lines are quoted will remember that it ends with a chord which Richard Jefferies never struck.

Absolute sincerity and accuracy characterise all that Jefferies wrote, his descriptions of rural life and scenery no less than "The Story of my Heart." He never said things for effect, or posed. In fact, however beautiful his language, however closely his prose might some-

¹ The "Hound of Heaven."—*Francis Thompson.*

times border on poetry, he was a naturalist and scientific observer in the first instance, and only secondarily the literary artist who uses the material thus gained for beautiful word-pictures. Keen and passionate as was Jefferies' enjoyment of beauty, he tells us himself that it was necessity not choice which drove him to reproduce it in his writings. "Amaryllis was a passive and not an active artist by nature, and I think that is the better part; at least I know it is a thousand times more pleasure to me to see a beautiful thing than to write about it. Could I choose I would go on seeing beautiful things, and not writing." It may be this fact which makes Jefferies' essays difficult to read with enjoyment for long together, fascinating as their subject may be. There is a touch of effort about the style, a feeling of weariness of which the reader cannot but be conscious. It is like going on talking to a delightful companion, whom we catch occasionally suppressing a yawn! The edge is taken off our enjoyment of the conversation. There are suggestions too, here and there, of that inevitable note-book and pencil which accompanied Jefferies in his walks. One is reminded of Wordsworth's remark that "Nature does not permit an inventory to be made of her charms." Jefferies rivals Tennyson in the minuteness and accuracy of his powers of observation, but he cannot wear his knowledge so lightly, and we are bound to confess that we catch now and again an echo, from the days when he was reporter to a local newspaper.

The same spirit of truthfulness which characterised Jefferies' descriptions of scenery is apparent in his treatment of rural life. He gives us no fancy sketches of the country, no idyllic pictures of peaceful village homes, of happy haymakings and harvestings, of a peasantry untainted by vice or avarice or guile, in whose faces and lives the beauty of inanimate nature is reflected. Jefferies' account of rural life is convincing by its pitiless truth to fact. We recall Ruskin's words about the actual effects of mountain scenery upon the inhabitants of such regions, when we read how little the beauty of the harvest-field may touch the heart of the harvester, as he labours through the long summer hours. The story of Dolly is a reminder that the idyll of the hayfield may end in a tragedy—we must perforce recognise that country maidens are not always as pure and modest as Ruth in the gleanings-field, that village husbands may beat their wives as brutally as the denizens of any London slum. Human nature is the same everywhere, he seems to say, and Nature herself has no power over its fiercer moods.

Those who know anything of life in primitive parts of the country must recognise the characteristics of the Bethel congregation, their narrowness and bigotry no less than the invincible zeal and determination which drives them to tramp for miles on Sundays after a hard week's work to share in that peculiar form of worship, so crude and unspiritual in the eyes of the outside observer, which they have nevertheless learned to identify with the essentials of true religion.

One can hardly write of Richard Jefferies without recalling Thomas Hardy to mind, so much have the two writers in common. Both are familiar with all the details of rural life in the south of England, which they describe with intimate and personal knowledge; both possess that faculty which enables them to discern beauty and poetry in the ordinary sights and sounds of country life. As an artist Thomas Hardy carries off the palm. His touch is lighter, his imagination more vivid and powerful, his mastery of English more complete. We feel at once the truth of his descriptions, without pausing, as it were, to think them out. He needs fewer words, less definition and detail than Jefferies; there is more magic in his touch, he can stir our imagination to supply what he leaves unsaid. But judged from another standpoint Jefferies has something which Hardy surely lacks, a noble and lofty ideal, an innate belief in and admiration of moral as well as physical beauty and purity. Hardy seems to look with a sort of cynical acquiescence on the moral shortcomings of the country districts; there is a sense of inevitableness and fatality about his work which would kill all hope or desire to create any higher standard, should we yield to its spell. Jefferies' writings breathe a different spirit. While he looked all the facts of rural life in the face, as they presented themselves to him, he never acquiesced in their necessity. He felt too keenly "the pity of it," that idyllic innocence should be so rare, a low standard of life so common.

The message of Jefferies is not only for those whose days are passed in the country; he has much to say to the dwellers amid bricks and mortar, the noise and ugliness of city streets. Not only does he recall to them the joys of those distant solitudes in which his soul delighted, but he shows how much beauty and romance is to be found in London itself, amid all the unloveliness of the noisy thoroughfares.

"The sunlight and the winds enter London, and the life of the fields is there too, if you will but see it." Though his heart could not find refreshment in those crowded thoroughfares of the city along which Charles Lamb delighted to pace, when tired or out of spirits, London exercised over him an irresistible fascination, and could draw him into her vortex away from the quiet fields and hedgerows, almost against his own will. "The inevitable end of every footpath about London is London. All paths go thither. If it were far away in the distant country you might sit down in the shadow upon the hay and fall asleep, or dream awake hour after hour. There would be no inclination to move. But if you sat down on the sward under the ancient pollard oak in the little mead with the brook, and the wood of which I spoke just now as like a glade in the enchanted Forest of Arden, this would not be possible. It is the proximity of the immense City which induces a mental, a nerve-restlessness. As you sit and would dream a something plucks at the mind with constant reminder; you cannot dream for long, you must up and away, and turn in which direction you please, ultimately it will lead you to London. There is a

fascination in it; there is a magnetism stronger than that of the rock which drew the nails from Sindbad's ship. . . . There is something in the heart which cannot be satisfied away from it." Some of Jefferies' best descriptive work deals with London; "Sunlight in a London Square" and "Venice in the East End" are among his masterpieces. "Open your eyes, and see those things which are around us at this hour." That is his watchword in London as on his beloved Wiltshire Downs. In the suburbs of London, the butt for cheap ridicule since the days when the Cockney school of poets first won their opprobrious title, Jefferies found never-failing sources of interest and delight. In "Nature near London" he shows us what abundance of life there is to watch in river and road and field within a few miles of Charing Cross. Even such a prosaic matter to most of us as a journey from London to Brighton can be wrought by him into a splendid mosaic, glowing with all the colours of midsummer. "Purple heathbells gleam from shrub-like bunches dotted along the slope; purple knapweeds lower down in the grass; blue scabious, yellow hawkweeds where the soil is thinner, and harebells on the very summit; these are but a few upon which the eye lights while gliding by. Glossy thistledown, heedless whither it goes, comes in at the open window. Between thickets of broom there is a glimpse down into a meadow shadowed by the trees of a wood. It is bordered by the cool green of brake fern, from which a rabbit has come forth to feed, and a pheasant strolls along, with a mind, perhaps, to the barley garden. Or a foxglove lifts its purple spire; or woodbine crowns the bushes. The sickle has gone over, and the poppies which grew so thick a while ago in the corn no longer glow like a scarlet cloak thrown on the ground. But red spots in waste places and by the ways are where they have escaped the steel."

Yet after all neither London nor its outlying regions had the first place in Richard Jefferies' heart at any period of his life. That was kept for Coate Farm and its neighbourhood. We have come to know it intimately from the oft-repeated descriptions of it which occur again and again in Jefferies' books; the garden, the orchard, the fields, the neighbouring hills, where the long midsummer day was all too short for enjoyment of their delights. In "Amaryllis at the Fair" he takes us behind the scenes, and we learn something of the daily life of its inmates. Jefferies' powers of observation were not limited to one special field; his account of "Farmer Iden," for instance, who is said to be sketched from his own father, is as minute and detailed as anything he ever wrote. We can picture the man in his worn and threadbare clothes, stooping over his potato-planting, or discoursing to an unsympathetic audience on the merits of swede-greens, bringing the resources of a really fine intellect to bear on unremunerative toil—always in arrears, a marred man, with no prospect of a brighter future. It was probably from his father that Jefferies inherited his inability to turn his talents to practical account on any scale adequate to their

deserts and his own necessities. He has surely put much of himself into "Amaryllis," especially his early experiences of struggle and disappointment, when the hope of appealing to a wider circle than the readers of a country newspaper seemed remote indeed.

"She worked very hard, and worked in vain. The sketches all came back to her. Some of them had a torn hole at the corner where they had been carelessly filed, others a thumb-mark, others had been folded wrongly, almost all smelt of tobacco. Neither illustrated papers, nor periodicals; neither editors nor publishers would have anything to do with them. . . . Nothing so hard as to succeed by merit; no path so full of disappointments; nothing so incredibly impossible." Surely in these bitter words we touch on an actual, not an imagined experience. Richard Jefferies himself, the obscure young newspaper reporter, speaks through Amaryllis. Indeed it is his inability to escape from himself and his own thoughts and feelings, that helped to keep Jefferies from ever attaining success as a novelist pure and simple. He cannot project himself into another mind, he never really gets *inside* a character, or sees the world from any outlook but his own—he is not sympathetic or imaginative enough ever thoroughly to understand or grasp a situation foreign to his own experience. His character sketches are like good photographs, true to the minutest detail submitted to the camera, yet after all lacking in that which gives a first-rate portrait life and individuality.

"As when a painter, poring on a face,
Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man
Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
The shape and colour of a mind and life,
Lives for his children, ever at his best."

Tennyson's words have a wider than their original significance, and suggest what we miss in Jefferies' work—doubtless he saw more than he could express, in this and other matters, as every true artist must, but he did not see enough to satisfy himself, either in Nature or Man; his eyes were holden to the inmost significance of both. He cannot show us that which he failed to find either in nature or humanity, that which was to Wordsworth all in all.

"And I have felt
A presence which disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

Nature to Wordsworth was indeed the garment of God. It was not so much the actual lakes and mountains and flowers which he loved,

dear as they were to him; they were the means by which he approached that invisible, intangible Presence which so often seems to elude us, perhaps because, like the air, it surrounds and envelops us so closely, were our eyes but opened to see, our hearts to understand. It is probable that Jefferies' knowledge of Nature in every changing aspect, in detail of bird and animal life, was far greater than Wordsworth's, perhaps even than Tennyson's; but both poets, in different degrees, have penetrated deeper into her mysteries. There is a touch of dogmatism in Jefferies' absolute denial of the hopes and beliefs on which so many of the noblest of mankind have relied, which repels even those who are most attracted by the beauty of his work. Had he possessed, in addition to his other great gifts, the divine faculty of intuition, which enables a man to penetrate through and beyond the phenomena of sense to the divine realities which they veil, he would have ranked with the seers. It is the lack of that faculty which makes so much of his work sad reading. Doubtless he found comfort in his own belief that the present unexplained sorrow and suffering of humanity are destined to be merged in an ideal future for the race, but human nature, for the most part, needs more immediate comfort in the face of present distress. We are told that as troubles thickened round Richard Jefferies, he reverted to the old beliefs which he had discarded.

Nearly thirteen years have passed since Jefferies dictated his last essay, and turned to his hard-won rest. The record of his last years is a very sad one, in spite of his growing literary fame. He was not the man to turn that fame into substantial wealth, and he died poor, as he had lived. Disease had tortured him for long before his death, accentuated by his own highly-strung and sensitive temperament. With little ambition or desire to leave his mark, as he undoubtedly has done, on the literature of his day, he was driven, by the necessities of maintaining himself and those dependent on him, to work when he would fain have rested, to write when he desired only to observe and enjoy in silence. The leisure was denied to him in which his powers might have been strengthened and developed to an even higher degree of excellence than that which he ever attained. We can only guess what he might have done "had Heaven," in the words of the poet Gray, speaking of his lost friend Richard West, "granted him a longer life and a mind more at ease."

M. R. HOSTE.

FAR EASTERN VIGNETTES

I. A GARDEN IN AZABU

THERE is a quiet road in Azabu shaded by trees, taller and older than others in Tokyo. They are grouped about the Shinto temple of Higawa, a temple which was old before Tokyo became a city, and they have shadowed the sacred buildings for many a year.

All day long grave-faced men and women and demure children go up the granite steps under the faded beams of the red-lacquered gateway. The steps are few, for the temple is singular in this, that it stands only a little above the level of the road, instead of being gained by much arduous climbing, as is usual.

Across the road there is a commonplace iron gate, and within it a long avenue of cherry trees which meet overhead, forming an arcade, snow-white for a while in spring, and sending down snow-showers of petals to lie drifted deep in the road below, till the old garden woman comes with broom and barrow and clears them away. There is a green shade in the summer, and a most delicate enlacement of purple-grey twigs after the leaves fall, which they do while the fierce sun still strikes on them, and before any touch of crimsoning frost has come, such as sets the maples on fire. We push aside the glass slides of the low Japanese house at the farther end of the avenue, and, passing across the matted floors, we come out on a verandah, from which great water-worn stones serve as steps to lead down into the garden.

First we see that tall trees bound it and shut it in. Only on the eastern side are there gaps in the line. There the ground falls abruptly, rising soon as suddenly on the other side of a deep, narrow glen, filled closely with poor cottages, which are, however, quite invisible from the garden. One can catch through the openings glimpses of the wooded cliff opposite, gay with blossoms in spring, and showing here and there a quaintly-carved roof peeping from the trees, or a group of grave-stones hanging where the slope is steepest in the rear of some low temple.

The garden is mostly lawn of thick, short bamboo grass, in which dwarfed trees and flowering shrubs are growing at intervals which seem fortuitous, but which have all been studied for perspective effect. There are several little hills in the garden, with shrubs in proportion about their sides. From the top of each a different view is to be obtained. From one a blue line, which is the sea; from another a second sea of white walls and carved roofs set in greenery fills all the plain to the northward, with the great dome of the Russian Cathedral

suggestively conspicuous. A third hill is the "Fuji Miru," the place from which we make out, when the atmospheric conditions are favourable, the ever new wonder of the gleaming peak of the Sacred Mountain.

On the more level side of the garden there is a bowery trellis covered thickly with wisteria, and between it and the verandah are beds full of English flowers, violets in profusion, primroses, wallflower and daffodils, and when these pass, mignonette, honeysuckle, carnations, sunflowers and poppies, foxgloves and hollyhocks, and one waving bush of broom, the seed of which came from far.

To the right a clump of trees shades one end of the house and a part of the lawn from the afternoon sun; a tall maple, purple, pink, green, crimson, scarlet by turns, as the seasons change, two or three pomegranates, and a gnarled and heavy plum tree, a dead thing when life is most vivid round it, bursting into a wonder of soft white bloom before the January snow showers have well ceased to veil its twisted boughs.

Under the trees stand two stone tanks—the one scooped out roughly from an uneven block, the other square and shapely, with inscriptions of sacred import carved on its sides. It is one of those water-vessels which stand in every temple courtyard for purposes of ceremonial purification.

The monkey's poles are near the tanks; she can leap from her cross-bar into the boughs of the maple, or swing down and dip her skinny hands and her funny pink nose into the water. Her name is "Jenny," but oftener "The Ape." She had a companion once, who made the journey from Borneo with her, but "Sally" was always feeble, unfit to struggle with the artificial conditions of her new life, and pining for her tropical woods. Jenny's hugs of sympathy and cuffs of encouragement were all in vain. When the unknown winter came and froze the life out of the poor little exotic creature, Jenny pined for a while. She seems resigned now, and does mischief enough for two.

At the other end of the garden the goat is tethered. She is a gentle brown and white creature from Singapore, and seems lonely since the death of her kid, which happened lately with tragic details.

In front of the verandah a big white and yellow cockatoo screams loudly for "Mother," and a lonely canary near him tries in vain to emulate the noise with his trills. Where is his pretty yellow mate? The grey cat made a mouthful of him, and now the kitten prowls about the cage, and longs to be grown up. Once two turtle-doves cooed there in their wicker cage. The dogs "Tippo" and "Blackie" can say what happened to those. The "Mina" from Canton came to an end before his education in talking was far advanced. And so it fares with the pets, as with all things mortal, except perhaps the donkey, who, having survived the sack of Port Arthur, must bear a life more or less charmed. The tale of lamentation is ever new;

we cease to inquire into the fate of silkworms and gold-fish and other such *ephemeræ*.

There is a pond at the other end of the garden, with water enough generally to serve some practical purposes, such as floating a paper boat, or wetting a tiny shoe in the course of the wearer's efforts after an irrigation system, or other muddy dabbling loved by the children. A few rushes and an iris plant or two are meagre and sickly, and do not add much to the charm of the garden.

At the foot of one of the little *yama* a fir tree stands; it is bent and twisted artificially in Japanese fashion—a fashion how old? Who knows? The Romans brought it from Asia to the West long ages ago, as we read. A carved lantern of grey granite stands under the tree; the fragments of another, earthquake broken, lie near, half hidden by the twigs of the dwarf azalea, which is growing there thick and close, like the blackberry plants round the "Druid Stones" at home; and not far off are two lions smiling their fixed smile, which is almost a grin, in grey, weather-worn stone.

Close to their carven paws is Elsie's garden, not easy to describe, for it changes daily. It is frequently surrounded by a neat bamboo fence three or four inches high, which is its most distinctive feature, if we except a pond in the middle, which has bridges and islands and stepping-stones, all the characteristics of a pond except water.

In spring and summer there are children in the garden—the little English children of the house and their allies, "Boy San," the butler, who can fly a kite as well as adorn a dinner-table, the Chinese boy, Ah Gun, brilliant in grass-green trousers, and an underling or two, glad to escape from the routine of "foreign" servitude, and to forward the play of the little ones on strictly Japanese lines. They fly gigantic bird-kites, which go hopelessly to roost in the higher boughs of the trees; or they rig up the great fish, which inflates its grey paper body, and moves its yellow fins as it hangs, one of thousands to be seen all over the city at certain seasons, catching the breeze at the top of their tall white poles—symbolising successful effort, and luck, and a flowing tide, and all that is most prosperous for the boys of each household. Or they draw a long bow, which might have baffled Ulysses, scoring by united effort, and after many failures, a success which is only too brilliant, as it sends the arrow to lose itself among the close-clustered cottages in the glen.

There is a garden party now and then. Or it is night, and red lanterns hang from the maple tree, and light up the glass and silver of the dinner-table, which is placed there for coolness. But where the lanterns are, there are the mosquitoes, and we hurry over the meal, and move our chairs back into the dark, sitting there in a frank idleness, which is justified by a thermometer close on ninety.

Very early in the year the garden bursts into blossom. The plum trees begin before the first hint of spring; then comes the white cherry blossom, followed later by the pink cherry with its thick, heavy

clusters of double flowers like larger Banksia roses. There is the scarlet of the *Pyrus Japonica*, and the pink and white blush of the quince. Great round bushes of daphne and gardenia, growing in retired corners, proclaim themselves by the scent which they throw out lavishly.

These end, and then the garden is blazing with azalea—scarlet, orange, yellow, and white. Sturdy full blossoming plants they are, with a free hillside air about them, suggestive of pleasant wild things on moorlands far away. Before the azalea bloom has passed the wisteria droops in yard-long streamers, delicate in dove colour and faint scent. Nothing lasts long; we have had no time to lament the faded blossoms of the wisteria when we are called to look at the roses. These come in a revel of profusion, worthy of a Roman banquet. They too pass, and only the exotic geraniums ranged in pots round the verandah, keep up the scarlet note, with a response from the pomegranate trees, where blossoms linger among the fruit. The grass grows greener and greener all through the summer days, and keeps its grey hues for the winter. Autumn brings vivid glories of its own, and the winter is bright and cheery in spite of the faded grass. The camelias blossom in autumn and spring with hardly a winter pause. The red heads fall in thousands from their trees, and are strewn as on a crimson battlefield below; or such is the fancy of the Japanese, who consequently hold the pretty tree in but moderate favour in spite of its shining foliage. The pine and the ilex, and many an evergreen besides, keep the garden green; and the snow comes gently down in rare, prized visits, giving us a new set of tones and pictures as it lies on the boughs.

And so the seasons pass. The flowers fall and are renewed. The pets die, and others take their place. We too go far from the Azabu garden. Only the lions under the pine-tree sit unchanged, smiling their stony smile.

J. RANKEN.

IN THE WIND

BY THE EDITOR

TWO months ago in these pages I spoke with confident expectation of the speedy relief of Mafeking; and now, even as I write, the sound of the cheering is just dying away. No one who has made his gradual way through the streets of London in these latter days is likely to forget the scenes spread out before him from every point of vantage. The whole country, from Land's End to John o' Groat's, the whole Empire, from any point eastward or westward to any other point round the world, has been throbbing with the enthusiasm of weeks and weeks, now suddenly released and carrying all before it. The central point, the very heart of the whole, is here in London. I am not going to assert that "we shall not look upon its like again." It is practically certain that the same intense excitement will sweep through the country once more at least before the war is over, and yet again when all is finished, and we welcome the conquering hero home. This being so, I am by no means in a mood to deluge this page and my readers with superlatives. Yet it is very tempting. Listen to this: "*We are nearing, please God, the end of the greatest war this country has ever waged. We are coming to the close of the greatest military achievement in history.*" This is the testimony of one of our morning papers. Lord Macaulay used to counsel the historian to seek his material in the newspapers. I wonder what he would have thought of the New Journalist? About as respectfully, I suppose, as the New Historian thinks of Lord Macaulay.

* * *

The poets have been as active on the war's account as might have been anticipated. So far, they have produced nothing particularly momentous. Not that the leading men have been silent. We have heard Mr. Swinburne; but not at his happiest. Mr. Newbolt has given us a dozen lines which deserve to be, and perhaps will be, remembered. Mr. Thomas Hardy has written several poems which none but he could have written: curious, haunting verses, deeply spiritual in meaning and force, and, in common with much of the work of modern poets, somewhat difficult to read. Of course there is a constant stream of patriotic verse in the cheaper periodicals, much on a level with that which is provided by the proprietors of the music-

halls. Even *The Times* has condescended to make itself the medium for conveying doggerel to the masses: a fact scarcely to be wondered at when we remember that the laurel wreath

"Of him that uttered nothing base"

has been placed on the brows of Mr. Alfred Austin. We all know, of course, that a good deal of indiscriminating scornfulness has been poured out upon the head of the present Poet-Laureate, but after reading such lines as those to which a place of honour has been given by a leading daily paper, is it wonderful that men should hardly care to discriminate between this and that bearing the same signature? Here is a sample:—

"Then when hope dawned at last,
And fled the foe aghast
At the relieving blast
 Heard through the melly,
O, our stout stubborn kith!
Kimberley, Ladysmith,
Mafeking, wedded with
 Lucknow and Delhi!"

The verse which every editor of a Magazine receives in large quantities and rejects without a sign of that emotion which he cannot fail to feel when he is forced (as he often is) to reject work that shows some sign of merit, is often vastly superior to this. And the stanza I have quoted is not by any means the worst of the seven. There is one reflection, however, which may console us. The celebration of our feelings does not depend upon official any more than it does upon topical utterances. The man who writes of great events does well if he waits till the first feeling of emotion is over. Some great poems, but not many, have been written at white-heat. On the other hand, the sacred fire burns on when the multitude has forgotten all about it. Then he strikes a note which is heard. This is not a fanciful notion, but a solid and a simple fact; and some day the story of the siege of Mafeking will be enshrined in immortal verse. Very likely the writer will receive no recognition at first. The subject will not be fresh enough in the public mind for the acceptance of the average editor. My friend of "the greatest achievement in history," for instance, will pass it back to the author with an amiable smile. But some day it must see the light and take its place among the imperishable treasures of English song.

Poets may be fairly busy, but authorship generally is more or less at a discount. Only the other day I read a cheerful article from the pen of a modern man of letters, whose object it was to prove that writers have too easy a time of it, that his "job" is rather too "soft" to be compatible with manliness, and that the day must sooner or later come in which the scribbler will be forced to turn his hand to something useful. Yet the Authors' Society held its record annual dinner a week or two ago. Mr. Bernard Shaw was no less whimsical than usual when he asserted that his adoption of the trade of authorship was due to the fact that he was averse to all forms of honest work. It would be interesting to know how many members of the Society of Authors belong to the Volunteers. I imagine that men who write are on the whole as patriotic as men engaged in other forms of labour; and that writing *is* labour, sometimes of a very arduous kind, all students of literary history and of modern life know well enough. It is hardly necessary to dwell upon it. The man who sits at his desk day after day would often give a good deal to be out in the open air. Such delights are seldom for him. Now, in addition to all his other trials, he must bear with the notion that the world could get on very well without him. On the other hand, he may console himself with the reflection that the Society of Authors itself, the great body which has taken upon itself the task of proving that the craft to which "Shakespeare's self" belonged is "a profession," flourishes exceedingly.

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And yet would any man bring up his son resolutely and of set purpose to be an author? The gains of authorship are sometimes very large. They are generally very small. Will not prudence incline the father of a family to check this preposterous demand of a body of people (who could so very well be dispensed with) to be considered as essential to polite existence? In these days the power of the purse will supply the answer. If industry *plus* ability in authorship can raise a man to a fair height of general consideration, that occupation, it may be granted, is socially safe. If not, the fate of its pretensions is settled. And here occurs to me the idea that in this connection a letter of Harrison Ainsworth's, which is in my possession, will be read with interest. Written over fifty years ago to an old master, and never before published, as I believe, it runs as follows:—

" KENSAL MANOR HOUSE,
HARROW ROAD, LONDON,
April 7th, 1842.

" MY DEAR DR. E.,—You must excuse a very short note in answer to your kind and sympathising letter, because I am much pressed for time, and am, of necessity, obliged to abridge all my correspondence.

"You ask me how much I have made by my literary exertions in any one year. I will just put down the positive gains of last year:—

"Old St. Paul's" . . .	£1000	0	0
Editorship, <i>Bentley</i> . . .	612	0	0
For "Guy Fawkes" . . .	150	0	0
"Tower of London" (about) . .	300	0	0
	<hr/>		
	£2062	0	0

by which you will see that I made upwards of £2000 in that year. By similar exertions, I could make the same amount in any year. Fortunately, however, it is no longer necessary for me in a *pecuniary* point of view to write at all, being blessed with a competent fortune. As a matter of literary curiosity, it may be interesting for you to know how much one of your old pupils has gained by his pen.—Ever yours affectionately,

W. HARRISON AINSWORTH."

Such a letter as this, written by a popular favourite, is an indication of how things stood half a century ago. Prosperity brings heavier money-bags now to the successful writer, and yet—and yet—merit often goes starving. So is a cautious father often abundantly justified.

